



MAGNOLIAS
IN BLOOM
AND
OTHER
STORIES

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Very sincerely,
Mrs. L. E. Scott,

MAGNOLIAS ABLOOM.

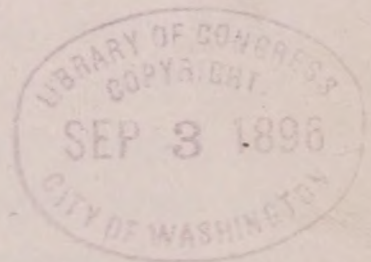
A STORY OF
BUTLER'S REIGN IN NEW ORLEANS

✓
By MRS. C. C. SCOTT,
Author of "Maws Jeems," "Render Unto Cæsar,"
"Little Miss Bettie," etc.

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TO THE
KNIGHTS OF THE CROSS OF SAINT ANDREW,
TO THAT
NOBLE ARMY OF HEROES
WHO WORE THE GRAY,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED.

*Arkadelphia, Arkansas,
March, 1894.*

MAGNOLIAS ABLOOM.

A STORY OF THE SOUTH.

CHAPTER I.

“While the perfumed lights
Stole through the mist of alabaster lamps,
And every air was heavy with the sighs
Of orange groves, and music from sweet lutes
And murmurs of low fountains that gush forth
I’ the midst of roses.”

CELESTE had just said good-bye to her lover. She had borne up bravely, my father said, when she joined us on the front veranda—after tarrying a little while on the west porch with her head on Honorine’s shoulder.

I heard my mother call Celeste “a phantom of delight.” I knew she was more than that, she was a sunshiny, clear-headed girl. She was prime mover in all my pleasures; while the stately Honorine rarely ever descended from her dignity to recognize my presence.

Of course I loved Celeste the better of the two, and her sweetheart, Charlie Tremaine

was the finest fellow on the river, Grandma said.

I was sorely grieved when they left us to go down to the city, for when Celeste was gone we missed her.

After all these years I find there is more of sorrow than joy, more of tragedy than of comedy in these lives of ours; though then, in my sunny boyhood no dream of aught but brightness crossed my horizon.

Charlie Tremaine belonged to the artillery service and had been in love with our Celeste ever since she was a school girl. I knew all about it, for I used to play I was asleep and listen to them talk—in the parlor, on the veranda, anywhere, for wheresoever Celeste was there I was also.

"It must be for the last time—I shall not see you again for months—if ever again," Captain Tremaine, that's what they called Charlie, was saying.

"Let's hope for better things, for better times," Celeste said brightly. "Say you are coming home soon—to stay."

"There is no such prospect, not a glimmer of hope. We are in a deplorable tangle. I am glad you do not realize it, my Celeste."

Ah, did she not? So bravely hiding her own heartaches! So true an "embassador of a most fair mind"—so self-sacrificing in spirit!

Celeste's beautiful unselfishness always reminded me of George Elliot's words: "The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts, and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs."

"You will soon be home to stay, Charlie," Celeste declared, winking back her tears.

"You will think of me often—keep me with you by thinking and speaking of me—and love me the while, my Celeste?"

"'Until death do us part,'" Celeste's trembling voice answered.

How sweet it was to hear it! How sweet to say it! This making assurance doubly sure in love's young dream. In those halcyon days the beautiful sunshine of youth, the golden light, flooded earth, sky and river with warmest, richest glory—painting the clouds of day with purest sapphire and suffusing the broad river with resplendant crimson sunsets.

"All the world loves a lover." A mocking bird hearing Celeste's vow trilled out a shower of ecstatic melody by way of applause. The little stream that stole its way outside the gate gave utterance in sympathetic cadence to a merry, babbling minstrelsy as it went laughing over the white sands and creeping under the willows—through green grasses

which fairies might well have selected for nightly revels or idle day-dreamings.

Laden with all its mists and shadows I push back Time's dusty curtains and see again the love-lighted past with all its beauty and delight, its splendor, its glad gayety, its sights and sounds which rise up clearly, leaving an echo in my heart like the "fine horns of Elf-land blowing," yet loud enough to fill my memory with all the life and glory, the actual coloring influence and perfume of that blest time, now passed forever—dead in the dust of Long Ago, alive only in Recollection. I see my beautiful cousin Celeste with her sunny hair and childish face standing under the magnolia at the west gate saying good-bye to her soldier lover. His handsome, boyish face now lighted with passionate love, now serious with the thought of separation and sad forebodings for the future, one arm was round Celeste's waist and he held her hand in his.

"Think of it Charlie, you will be home in a little while—to stay. The time will pass on wings with you in the whirl and excitement of soldier life, and after a while you will come home."

"'It may be for years,' my Celeste, 'and it may be forever.' You cannot realize the utter hopelessness of our cause—the sadness of our parting. It seems cruel to leave you—it

would be dishonorable to stay. Celeste, my beautiful darling, it breaks my heart to leave you. 'I did not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honor more.'"

A gun boat, like a great lazy turtle, lay asleep just around the bend, and the river was in high-wave from the passing boats. Captain Tremaine looked at his watch, took Celeste in his arms, kissed her cheeks, her lips, her brow, but spoke no word. He waved his hand in parting after he had mounted his horse, and galloped away through the woods.

Celeste stood leaning on the gate watching the scarlet-and-gray figure until it was lost in the distance.

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee," I heard her whisper, as she turned away. I followed her to the west porch where Honorine sat. She said not a word, for Honorine scarcely ever talked; but held out her arms for Celeste, who cuddled down in her lap and cried on her shoulder. My father said Celeste was a brave little girl. Honorine said, "Don't, honey."

Soon both were on the front veranda with the family.

I remember that we were a very happy family. My father had something pleasant to say to each of us, and expressions of appreciation makes even very dull people brighter and happier. We were a mutual admiration society,

for we complimented each other every day upon some special point in character or accomplishment, and my sweet, young mother and I came in for a double share.

I was particularly fortunate in this respect; for I not only had the admiration of the family, but the adoration of every slave in our quarter. Our girls were the handsomest on the river, and I was thinking of how lovely they were, when I lay on my lounge that night. I heard Celeste talking.

"Honorine, do you think it is intended that people shall be perfectly happy in this world?"

"Such a question is hard to answer, honey. Sister Mary-Joseph used to tell us that we have, under God, our lives in our own hands, and that our happiness rests with ourselves. I cannot tell what is best for us, weal or woe," Honorine answered wearily.

"Why, Honorine!"

"We grow careless and selfish in the brightness of unalloyed pleasure and are elevated, lifted out of ourselves, as it were, by suffering. We are purified by sorrow, honey."

I don't think as much love and tenderness was ever expressed in one word as Honorine put into that little word "honey."

"I know of what you are thinking, Honorine. I see it in your beautiful eyes every day

Do you feel that your sorrow has made you better—softer?”

“I don’t know, honey.”

“I do. Six months ago you would have laughed to scorn my grief of to-day. When Charlie left me you took me in your arms and comforted me. Ah, Honorine! How good you are!”

Celeste took her face in her hands and kissed her.

“You must cheer up, Honorine. Grandma will worry over your sadness.”

“The old heartache has never left me—never will, I fear,” sighed Honorine.

I lay listening, my heart softening towards my haughty cousin, when I remembered the story of her sad little romance so rudely cut short by a Yankee bullet at Shiloh; for Honorine’s lover had worn the Gray and had yielded up his young life, one of the many victims on the altar of freedom.

He sleeps where he fell. With all his talent, aristocratic birth and social standing, Honorine’s gray-clad hero filled the grave of a Private, and no purer, nobler name could be borne in such a struggle for Right and Country; for surely no thought of self mingled its alloy with the pure gold of his patriotism. Sorrow and anxiety had changed Honorine from a careless, happy girl to a statue—a sad-eyed

woman whose reserve never melted except toward her sister. There was a pitiful, weary pathos in her pure, pallid face and an anxious, touching expression in the great midnight eyes. Grandmother said she was young and would outlive her sorrow; but for all that, every one could see her solicitude for poor, unhappy Honorine.

For my part, I was always thinking of Celeste and Captain Tremaine—of the fine times they had promised me when the war was over and they were married and living at Esperanza, Captain Tremaine's plantation. I remember once when he was at our house he and Celeste were sitting on the settee under the trees while I lay on the grass at her feet, outside was a deep glade rich in fervid green and bright with sunshine. In the distance shone the river glittering like a band of silver through the willows.

It was one of those mid-summer days when the sunlight lies like a shimmering veil over the world—when nature seems breathing and palpitating through the heat-mists and a repose as profound as death is over all.

One of the days that fill the soul with a nameless devotion and that intangible longing for love and beauty which even the happiest and most richly endowed among us feel—a pas-

sionate yearning and a painful void, a day wherein we live because we feel.

Captain Tremaine held Celeste's hand as usual. I used to think he was dumb until he found Celeste's hand.

"I like to watch the sunset with you, my Celeste," he was saying. "The passing clouds seem to shape themselves into bright prophecies for the future, they are as words passing from each soul to the other breathing more fervent love than our lips can express; and when I see your beautiful face, my Celeste, lighted up with the same thoughts that are burning in my heart, then I know my thoughts, my hopes and prayers have not been in vain."

Celeste sat listening with a pleased expression. She was fond of Charlie and believed all he said.

"Do you not dream of the future, our future—once as far off as a star in the heavens, now so near, a beautiful temple and our feet almost on its threshold? Do you think of it, my Celeste?"

"Is it Esperanza you are talking about, Captain Charlie?" I asked vaguely, hoping we were going to start for that place immediately.

Celeste laughed.

"Uncle Ike is calling you, son; mammy is going to the bayou fishing," she said, and I ran to find out what the prospects were.

As I passed by them, with mammy, carrying my rod, I heard Captain Tremaine saying very softly:

"You think, too, as I do, my Celeste, of the time when holy words shall add their sanctity to our mutual love; when you shall wear the sacred crown of wifehood. Do not loving thoughts of me flit through your heart as thoughts of you linger in mine?"

"I cannot tell, even to myself. I cannot whisper the strength, the depth of my affection, still less can I express it to you," I heard Celeste say, and noticed how flushed her face was.

CHAPTER II.

"Oh, *dee* sun *shines* bright
In my *ole* Kaintuckee home
Hits summah, *dee* darkey is gay,
Dee cawn *top* ripe and *dee*—

What's dat?"

The song suddenly ceased to be resumed with the digging.

"De cawn *top* ripe an' *de* medder in *de* bloom,
Dee birds make *music* all *dee* day."

A wooly head was bared to the river breeze. Leaning his crutch against a tree Uncle Ike continued to dig bait, emphasizing the words of the melody with a stroke of his hoe:

*"Weep no mo ma ladee,
Weep no mo' ter day.*

I'll sing one song f' dee ole Kaintuck—"

"You will? Yaas, Lawd, two songs if you doan come on. Here's me'n leetle Mawster er waitin' dis hour. Come on, sonny. Le's be er gwine feeshin'."

I held on to the strong, black hand, while Uncle Ike came slowly down the path.

"Gotty bait?"

"Yessum."

"Gotty lines?"

"Yessum."

"An' er leetle hook f' son?"

"Yessum, in cose."

"Den come on, son," turning to me, "dees feeshes in dat bayou whot's fa'rly stannin' on der tailses f' dis man t' ketch 'em, an' de allygaters! Lawd! dee all gwine cry an' beller cos dis man-boy ain't biggernuff t' haul t' dee shore," mammy declared.

"Bet' n' let Mawster hyar such chat 'oman. Mawster ain't lak our sorter folks; he doan know how t' treat er nigger."

Uncle Ike laughed and rattled his fishing tackle.

 Yea verily. "Mawster" was not "like our sort of folks," but "a man's a man for a' that", Uncle Ike. "Misson Rene say son's er Dixie boy." Uncle Ike chuckled as we

trudged along, "An' Missle Es say es how son ain't got nair drap er Yainky blood in 'im. Which is yer sonny? Is yer Yainky or Confederick, man?

Aye, there was the rub?

I had spent hours in childish thought over that momentous question.

Union or Confederate?

I was the sole offspring of a French-creole mother and a New England father, and to which side I owed allegiance I was in doubt. My mother was a true daughter of the South, and as beautiful as a sunny June morning; she had been born and reared amid surroundings of wealth and refinement, her tastes were naturally and by education alive to all things beautiful and elegant, and furthermore, she had been taught by precept and example that a descendant of the ancient and aristocratic house of Hebert should never soil a finger in manual labor.

Ah, my poor, young mother!

Your beautiful dreams of life have all come true in that land where our lives are made complete—where there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." My beautiful mother had toiled not, neither had she spun, but had lived a human "lily of the fields."

My memories of my childhood are fraught with pleasure—intermingled, too, with the

most painful reminiscences of my life. My father was of the strictest sect of New England blood—a Puritan with a big P, whom my mother first met at a Northern watering place.

A mutual attachment was the result of the meeting and a hasty marriage the result of the mutual attachment.

My parents resided in my father's native village a few months after the marriage, when, pining for her own sunny land, my mother's will prevailed, and they came South to make their home.

I look back now at the character of my father with great affection and reverence. He was a psychological paradox. His will of iron, so uncompromising and unbending, was palliated by a nature tender, gracious and loving.

When the occasion demanded he was as stern as one of the old Hebrew prophets; but 'neath his hard exterior lay a nature grand and deep and true.

I suspect I was a spoiled boy, the hundreds of our slaves, whom he called "our people," made me their idol, and bowed down with a species of worshipful idolatry at the feet of "leetle mawster," while I loved every smiling black face among them.

Our plantation fronted the grand Mississippi river. For miles the levee stretched

along its treacherous banks, and back from its deep, calm flow lay the fertile valley lands.

Our residence was an irregular, one-story frame house, with broad verandas on every side.

Luxurious and delightful was plantation life, but my father sighed for occupation, for the practice of his profession, and we lived in the city an hundred miles below.

How I loved the old plantation!

Every moss-hung oak, green glade and bosky glen, and the dear, wrinkled faces of the superannuated darkies in the quarter were very near my childish heart.

Back in the distance lay the motionless bayou—it might be said asleep; the bright breeze that sung its soft lullaby amid the tree-tops disturbed not its placid waters, so that the dainty touch of a swallow's wing set rippling over its surface more widening circles, than ran their tiny lives, until the shores were reached, and then all was still again. Looking toward the glassy surface of the water mirrored in faithful duplication were the lovely pictures on its borders.

The rustling leaves of the oaks, with their festoons of gray-green moss hanging like funeral drapery, the swaying movement of the magnolia and sweet gum foliage, the bending grasses, and, looking deeper, over a nether

heaven, there floated the same snowy cirri which drifted overhead; even the butterflies fluttered from flower to flower beneath the surface as they did along the banks.

These scenes of my plantation home are vividly present, even through the mists of intervening years.

From the front veranda one could see the mighty river, uncoiled like a huge writhing serpent, as far as the eye could reach.

Away across the wide expanse of water deep and flowing was the fringed levee of the opposite shore, all green with grass and willows. The boats plowed their way up and down the mighty river, leaving in their wake huge, threatening waves.

The plantation house was built high upon pillars of brick in a grove of giant magnolias.

In the yard the glistening leaves of the magnolias were dashed with burning bits of color, where the rose vines clambered among the fragrant blossoms of white, the trees were full of birds and a thicket of red, white and yellow roses flourished at the end of the veranda with an under-current of rich green grass and all these under a dome of purest sapphire.

I had returned from fishing this never-to-be-forgotten afternoon in the balmy spring-

time; we were all sitting on the front veranda in view of the broad river.

Apollo, the plantation blacksmith, came up the walk and reaching over a clump of honey-suckles handed my father a letter. My father arose and went into the house, my mother followed him.

After an early tea we were again on the front veranda, my father looked pale and sterner than ever; my mother's dark eyes were full of unshed tears.

Again the tall figure of Apollo stood before us.

"Well, Apollo?" spoke my father interrogatively.

"What is it?"

"I wan't t' see you a minute, please, mawster," the negro answered, his yellow face showing a troubled expression as he came nearer.

"Very well," my father replied as he arose.

"Don't go," whispered my mother, catching his hand.

"Only to the gate, dear."

"Take Harry with you, then."

I grasped his strong right hand and ran down the steps to be gathered into Apollo's brawny arms, then hoisted to his shoulder.

"Mawster," spoke this modern Vulcan.

“You will have to talk to the niggers yourself, I am willing to abide by what you said and so is half the other men, but the younger ones ain’t so sure. Can’t you speak to them and explain as you did to us?”

My father hesitated a moment, and then replied: “I think it would be the better plan. Will you ring the bell?”

Back into the yard we went, Apollo depositing me upon the steps.

A moment later the plantation bell was tolling its message to every slave in our quarter, and in half an hour the back yard was thronged with a sea of faces, black, copper-colored, mulatto and octoroon. My father spoke to them from the veranda; he reminded them of their mutual promises; he would keep his to the letter and expected the same of them. He besought them to be patient—in a few weeks they would all be freedmen.

The Confederate forces at Forts Jackson and St. Phillip were in a state of mutiny. My father then thanked the throng before him for their obedience to his wishes, their respectful care of my mother and affection for me.

“And who among you,” he cried, raising me in his arms—“who among you promise to protect my wife and boy? Let those who make this promise raise their right hands!”

There under the magnolias, in the filtering moonlight, was their fealty sworn.

"Gawd bless mawster!" Uncle Ike cried, waving his hat as he leaned on his crutch. "Gawd bless mawster!" an hundred voices echoed as they dispersed to their homes.

Later on as I lingered near a window, I heard:

"Oh, *dee* sun shines bright
In my *ole* Kaintuckee home.
Hit's summah, *dee* darkey is gay,
Dee cawn top ripe an' *de medder*—"

fainter grew the notes and I knew that Uncle Ike was digging bait for a moonlight fishing excursion on the bayou. When at last I was sent to bed I heard my mother's sobs and my father's voice low and tender as if trying to comfort her. I tossed restlessly.

"Harold, my son," called my father.

"Yes, papa."

"You will take good care of your little mother while I am away?"

"Where are you going, papa?" I asked, running into my mother's room.

"My dear little son, papa's bright little boy!" he said caressingly.

"Where do you go, papa? Are you a Confederate at Fort Jackson?" I asked from the denseness of my ignorance.

"God forbid!" he exclaimed earnestly.

A hysterical laugh half strangled my mother.

"Harold, you are my child and, therefore, belong to the Union—so does your mother for she, too, is mine, my own little wife."

"I'm no Yankee, papa," I stoutly asserted.

"Who said you were not?"

"Honorine says I am a Dixie lad, and Celeste told me I wasn't at all Yankeeish. What am I, papa?" I anxiously inquired.

"You are the dearest, brightest boy alive. Your grandmother and the girls will probably meet you in the city. Good-night, my boy. May God in His wisdom direct and keep your ways. Harry, my darling, kiss papa and run along to bed."

I had never seen him so moved, his voice was unsteady, and a tear dropped upon my mother's hair as he held her close in his arms. I was consumed with curiosity. What did it all mean?

My mother's sobs reached my ears and it made me very unhappy to see her so distressed, and to this day I am utterly demoralized by a woman's tears.

After an hour's vain endeavor to sleep I arose and started into my mother's room. In passing a window I saw Apollo's face pressed against the upper sash. Tapping gently to attract my attention he beckoned me.

"Sonnie," he whispered.

I stepped outside and caught his hand.

"Son, wake your papa, easy now, honey."

A slight noise behind me caused me to turn, there were several armed men stealing softly through the cape jessamine hedge not a dozen yards away.

"Jayhawkers! My Gawd!" Apollo exclaimed under his breath.

CHAPTER III.

"We'll hunt no mo' for de 'possum an' de coon,
On de medder, de hill an' de sho';
We'll sing no mo' by de glimmer er de moon
On de bainch by de ole cabin do'."

How welcome was the sound of the old, cracked voice as Uncle Ike hobbled up the lane with his string of fish and merry heart!

Apollo stood like a brazen statue, the men stole around the house in single file and silently made their way to Mr. Lascelle's, the overseer, house lower down in the yard.

Apollo lost not a moment. As stealthily as an Indian he moved inside my room and softly called my father.

"Mawster! please hurry f' Gawd's sake. The Jayhawkers are in the yard, your horse is ready."

"All right, Appollo, don't get excited; I am coming in a moment."

A front window of my mother's room slowly opened and mammy stepped in, her black face almost gray with terror.

"Dar you stan'!" she exclaimed, pointing a finger of scorn at my father.

"Dar you stan', er kissin', an' er billin' an' er cooin'! I lay you won't feel so lovin' when dem white trash what's er sarching de quatter gits a rope roun' your naik. Huk kom da ain't done swung you, ole Ike tell de head leader you's done gone."

"Mawster! come on, de boat's comin' 'round de bend," urged Apollo.

"G'long!" mammy said savagely.

A hurried farewell and my father was gone. My mother lay pale and silent on her couch, a crushed and broken creature. Mammy took me on her lap and sat near my mother the remainder of the night.

Another day brought my maternal grandmother, who, in herself, was a social treasure.

Reader, did you know that staunch friend, your grandmother? She, whose patience like the dear Lord's mercy, "endureth forever;" whose withered yet ever willing hands swept clear the rough paths for your little feet; whose grand, thinketh-no-evil soul, foretold all usefulness and happiness for you; whose par-

tial eyes saw only purest motives and loftiest ambitions in your wildest escapades; whose abundant love threw an immeasurable, spotless mantle over your uprisings and your sittings down? My grandmother had come and my cup of content was full.

Three days after the departure of my father, we were visited by a squad of desperadoes in the uniform of Confederate cavalry, who inquired for my father.

I was shocked at the unblushing falsehoods couched in Apollo's replies to their questions, but made no comment. The cavalry men ransacked the whole place, except my mother's room, the house was closely searched as was the quarter, the out-buildings, and even the boat-house on the lake.

Apollo stood guard at the door of my mother's apartment and resisted their every attempt to enter.

"How was it, Apollo?" asked my grandmother, when the soldiers had galloped down the levee road. "How was it that you dared oppose these men? How they ride!"

"You see, ole mistis, I had de biggest comp'ny of men—more'n de white Cap'n got." The negro laughed.

"I see; but your men are not armed."

"Doncher be no ways oneasy, mistis," said black Ned assuringly, as he exhibited a re-

volver. "We all got dese leetle dawgs an' der barks plum sweet also."

"Where did you get that pistol, Ned?" grandmother asked, as the negro walked away chuckling at his conceit.

"Jake, where did you get yours?" she inquired of a tall, young Hercules.

"Laws a mussy! I got mine where Ned got hissen, mistis."

"Where?"

"I axes yer pardner, mistis; but—er—rer—wellum, yer sees es how—er—er—rer we cain't tell tales outen school. Yer recommends, mistis." Jake bowed profoundly.

"I understand you, Jake," grandmother's voice and manner spoke volumes.

"Mistis!" exclaimed Jake with another bow, "I sholy does ax yer pardner!"

"Hush, boy!" Apollo commanded. "Shet up, an' g'long drive them hawses further down in the cane an' look sharp after them mules too."

"Where is Mr. Lascelle?"

"Gone down t' the lower fields. Mistis we promised mawster to protect young miss, an' the boy—sonny, here, an' we got the shootin' iyons to do it with. You see, mistis."

"Very good, Apollo; you can go now."

Apollo walked down the steps smiling and well pleased.

A veritable tower of strength his tall athletic figure seemed as he leisurely sauntered off under the magnolias; he was above ordinary intellectually, and was the plantation oracle. What "Unk Pollus" did not know, the other negroes disdained to learn.

A week later we still lingered at the plantation, awaiting my mother's convalescence. I was happy in the companionship of the multitude of little darkerys that swarmed about our quarter. One of our specially enjoyable amusements, was that of holding revival meetings. I smile now to remember my peculiar success in "calling up mourners."

Negroes are very imitative and these little negroes would mimic perfectly the words and gestures of their elders. I well remember how my heart swelled with pride on one occasion, when a little darkey invited me to "meetin'" and said to my grandmother: "We wants son, cos he's our main shouter,"

I felt quit large when mammy remarked, "Son kin sho chaw glory," as I ran down the back steps.

"Our folks is orful upsot, ole mistis!" Uncle Dave suddenly announced, thrusting his snow-besprinkled head through the honeysuckle foliage.

"Dey's plum tarryfide. Ef you'd be so bleegin ole mistis es t' gib dem varmints er

talk bout de way some is leavin' der wife an' chilien hit mought do 'm some good. Dat nigger Gabe an' tother niggers, too, done say er far, well t' dee fambly a'ready. Lawd sabe my rotten ole soul!"

"What do they mean, Uncle David?"

"Gawd knows, I nebber seed sicher pack er varmints—plum dawgs! Wontcher talk t'm please 'm, ole miss?"

"Very well, I will talk if they will listen.

My grandmother knew the great influence she held over our people and was anxious to do what she could for them; indeed, in these uncertain, troublous times every good influence needed.

Four white people, my grandmother, mother, Mr Lascelle, the overseer, and myself were on this plantation among hundreds of half-rebellious slaves.

The older ones were well behaved and in the main easily managed; but the younger men sighed for pastures new, and longed talked of freedom.

In half an hour the backyard was again thronged with our people.

My grandmother spoke to them from an open window, her dear, sweet face wore a serious expression and her eyes were wet with tears:

"My people," she began, "I was not born

among you; but my life and yours have traveled the same path for many a year. We were young together, and I have grown old with the same kind black faces which knew my youth still around me. We believe in each other, you and me, we have always been friends.

“As mistress and servant, good will and good faith have existed between us; you have worked faithfully and cheerfully for me and mine. I, in turn, have abundantly supplied your wants and comforts; you have had no care for the morrow, and now that the tie of ownership is about to be broken, the bonds of friendship still remain, and I hope will continue through the years that are crowning our heads with silver, on to the time when the great Master shall call us all to Himself. I feel attached to you all, and take a personal interest in all that concerns you. You have helped me rear my orphan children, and—”

“Dot wos me; ‘taint nobody but me an’ ole Sar’ann help riz dem chillen!” Mammy interrupted, with an air of pride; “Go on, ole mistis, please’m.”

“Freedom gives you the rights of American citizens—heretofore you have had no name, no country. Now all is changed, and you are as responsible for your words and deeds as any white man. Take my advice, make for your-

selves good, honest names, and then work hard to keep them."

"Ole mis kin talk; but she calls herse'f better'n we is, ef we is free." This was from our housemaid, Rosetta, who had lately grown careless and impudent.

"I am your superior now and always," continued my grandmother, looking straight into Rosetta's face. "I shall never meet any of you on equal ground, but shall always be glad to hear of your successes in life. Your words and actions reflect blame or praise on me as on yourself, for I have been your mistress. Did you ever think of that? No one's words or deeds ever stop with himself; the influence of what he has said and done live after him. If any one of you are guilty of untruth, or theft, or desertion of your family, you bring shame and misery and disgrace upon every one of your race, and discredit upon my name."

"Tell em 'bout dey scanlis doins, mistis. Tell dem ashcats 'bout zartin' dey fambily, an' takin up wid yaller gals," Uncle Dave said in a stage whisper.

"Mistis skeer'd t' do dat!" Rosetta boldly asserted.

"Shet up!" Apollo seized the girl roughly by the arm, and half dragged her up the steps. "Set thar!" he commanded.

"Ole mis er preacher f'om way back,"

wheezed a fat old darkey just below the window.

"Huh, I'se glad I got one mo' moufful de gospel br'ade," Susan Ann said, with a pious whine. "Talk on, please'm, mistis."

Then in plain, forcible language, my grandmother called their attention to the holiest of all obligations, the most sacred of all responsibilities, those involved in the marriage relation.

She explained to them how binding were the marriage vows, and how the neglect of them in no wise loosen the bonds, but endangered truth and honor and even the salvation of souls.

She dwelt upon the beauty and sacredness of marriage, its holiness in the sight of God, its honor in the estimation of man.

In soft, glowing colors, she pictured to them a happy home—the father fulfilling his duty to wife and children, protecting, supporting, guiding them. The mother cherishing, loving, ministering, aiding with her slender strength and faithful care, the strong arm and willing hand on which the burden of their lives rest.

The children, growing up in the sunshine of such a home, into honorable men and useful women, to reflect credit upon their parents here and hereafter, "rise up and call them blessed."

Then the dear old lady called their minds to the reverse side of the picture—the broken, desolate home, forsaken by the father or mother. She pictured the children growing up with uncertain principles, tarnished names and shaken morals—taught by example to despise the most sacred obligations and to count for naught all things pure and holy and honorable.

“How, then,” she questioned, “can you fathers betray your trust, and mothers, who forsake your holiest duties, answer when the book of your life is unsealed, and your account called? Can you point to the work your hand has wrought and say: ‘Here am I, Lord, with the children Thou hast given me.’ With these soiled, ruined lives crying out to Heaven against you—lives which you, but for careless sinfulness and evil tempers, might have reared in honor and respectability. Can you expect reward or approval on that last day when all shall be revealed? Every duty you have cast aside, every obligation you have neglected, every bond you have broken will surely rise up in judgment before you. When the cloak of selfishness and untruth is torn away from your unclean souls will not the never dying agony of torment be preferable to the realization of your wasted time? Oh, my people, like the lepers of old you will long for some wilderness

into which to flee to hide your unclean souls even from God's knowledge."

Bravely and plainly the dear saint spoke; she had their interests near her heart, and with a fearless hand swept back the veil of sophistry, false reasoning and excuse which is draped so tastefully and deceivingly over the great social evil of separation and divorce, hiding with its graceful, shimmering folds the sinfulness and the horror of it. She showed these people its loathsomeness; showed it for the sickening, noisome thing it is, in all its blackness of deformity and disgrace.

The negroes listened attentively, glancing furtively at each other the while.

The overseer leaned against a pillar of the veranda and listened with uncovered head.

The negroes dispersed, discussing among themselves what "ole mistis" had said.

"Didn't ole mis sho' talk f'om way back?"

"Lawd! I reckon so. Ole miss come f'om de Jeems ribber, an' she's er lady er quality an' sterbility; ole mis ain't no dago, whatcher talkin' 'bout, nigger!"

"Well, Mr. Lascelle," my grandmother said, as she appeared on the veranda, "did you hear my talk to our people?"

The overseer doffed his hat and replied: "The finest sermon I've heard for many a year, madam."

“‘Pearls before swine,’ do you think?”

“Well, not with all of them. You have great influence with these people, but, madam, you’d as well talk to so many mules as to some of them. They don’t care to live decently, and wouldn’t behave if they did care; they are a hard lot,—some of them,” he added.

“But very loyal?”

“The majority are, I believe, madam.”

“You will remain here, Mr. Lascelle?”

“As long as permitted, madam.” Mr. Lascelle glanced at his empty sleeve.

“So much for the Confederacy,” my grandmother said.

“You will be good enough to occupy this house until further instructions. I shall be obliged to start for Vicksburg to-morrow. I pray God I may not be too late. With Apollo’s help I do not think—”

“Dey’s two boats stopped at our levee?” cried Uncle Dave, excitedly.

“Better git out de way, Mr. L’selle, cos dey’s atter you, an’ dey hang you, too, they want mawster, an’ dey wants de cotton, too. G’long dat swamp, man,” mammy insisted.

I ran around to the front veranda. Twenty men in Confederate uniform walked abreast down the broad road from the river.

CHAPTER IV.

Once more we were in our luxurious home in the suburbs of the city beside the great river.

I had left the plantation with many misgivings and still remember how, as we steamed round the bend, the faint, receding notes came to me:

“Weep no mo’, ma la’-dee,
We-ep no mo’ ter day,
We’ll sing one song f’ dee ole—”

“Dont’ stan’ dar cryin,’ son, dat’s like er—well, hit like er gal t’ be er cryin’ an er sniffin’.” Mammy led me in off the guards.

“What makes Uncle Ike always fishing?” I asked.

“Br’er Izik gits ti’de hawg meat, son. Come, le’s stay wid yo’ mudder.”

My home did not seem the same, and my thoughts were of the old plantation. I was with my mother in her own room; she lay as white and as beautiful as the trumpet-lilies outside the open window. A great sorrow had fallen upon us and my poor, pale mother had lain on her sofa motionless and tearless for days.

After persistent inquiries, I gleaned from the servants that my dear father had been executed by the Confederates as a spy. My

childish heart was heavy with grief and resentment, and I thought how much better it might have been had he been a Confederate at Fort Jackson.

My pretty orphan cousins, Honorine and Celeste, my tutor, whom we knew as Dr. Robert, a learned old gentleman of sixty years, my mother and myself composed our family.

Forts Saint Philip and Jackson had surrendered to the enemy and confusion and riot reigned supreme in our once peaceful city. I was forbidden to go beyond our gates but curiosity and a desire for adventure led me into the streets: I was just falling in rank with a procession formed by the rabble when a hand was laid upon my shoulder. I looked up and saw Dr. Robert.

"Come with me, Harold," he said: "they want you at home."

He took my hand in his and together we walked homeward; neither spoke for I had been taught never to talk to my tutor unless he first addressed me.

When we had come to our gate, I was surprised to see our veranda thronged with people. I questioned Dr. Robert with my eyes.

"My poor boy," he said pityingly. "Dear little boy, your mother died an hour ago. Come, Harold."

I ran up the steps half frantic and rushed

through the open window into my mother's room. Celeste caught me in her arms, weeping bitterly the while. I tore myself away and threw myself down beside the couch.

There lay my mother, so still, so white, so beautiful. In the twinkling of an eye I realized it all—knew all the concentrated agony in that little word, dead.

We will pass over this, the bitter heart-break of my childhood.

The afternoon after my mother's funeral, Dr. Robert bade my cousins be ready by noon the following day to return to the Convent of the Sacred Heart, a few miles up the river.

"The city is no place for you, and I will take charge of Harold," he said to Honorine.

The stars and stripes were now hoisted over our city and it passed from Confederate rule forever.

The cross of St. Andrew—that pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night of the heart-sick Confederate, went down amid groans of despair and shouts of victory. All was confusion and discord, turmoil and strife.

After my cousins were safely housed within the sacred walls of the convent, Dr. Robert and I lived alone in our large empty house with mammy and the other servants to minister to our wants. Every morning we attended mass in a little church, which in ante-

bellum days had been a private chapel and now stood in a weedy, neglected garden where broken statues and smashed fountains bore evidence of the visits of the destroyer. The white haired priest seemed in sympathy with his surroundings. The altar, covered with a white cloth, displayed none of the accustomed emblems, and a rude crucifix was the only symbol of remaining faith. The building was small; but small as it was, it was too spacious for the few who came to worship.

The terror which prevailed on every side—the dread that devotion to religion should be construed into adherence to the Confederacy, that submission to God's will should be interpreted as an act of rebellion against the sovereignty of human will, had gradually thinned the numbers, till at last the few who came were those whose afflictions had steeled their hearts against any reverses, and who were ready martyrs to whatever might betide them. These were almost exclusively women, the mothers and wives of those who had sealed their faith with their blood in the struggle for right and country.

Among these was one whose dress and manner spoke of better days and whose appearance commanded respect as she passed in and out of the little church. She was a small elderly woman, whose hair was white and whose face was a page of sorrow.

She led a little girl, of about my own age whose dark eyes and brilliant complexion gave her a look of almost superhuman beauty in that assemblage of furrowed cheeks and eyes long dimmed by weeping. It was not perhaps that the child's features were perfectly regular; but there was a certain character of expression in her face so different from all around her as to be almost electrical in effect. Untouched by the terrible calamities that burdened older hearts she seemed to be above the blight of sorrow, like one who bore a charmed life and to whom fate had been kind. I read a *jubilant* in her face as it beamed upon me in striking contrast to the stern, sad features of those who had borne the burden.

Every boy has in his nature a vein of gallantry and romance which though coming of itself, strikes deep root in his untried heart. Although its blossoms are so fleeting, the worldly wisdom of manhood often fails to blot out entirely this chivalrous sentiment of babyhood. Be this childish feeling whatever it may (and to older people it is only an amusing sentimentality), it should be encouraged.

So I, a curly-headed boy—almost a baby—felt my heart swell with heroic inspiration as I glanced at the little beauty across the church—so near and yet so far! I had almost reached the delectable mountain! It was my pleasure

to place a footstool for "the Duchess," as the soldiers derisively called her, after I had opened the pew door for the gentle old lady and her beautiful charge.

It was on these memorable occasions that I gazed spellbound into the fresh, childish face and as I stole noiselessly away, I carried in my soul hope and love and beauty. It seemed to my boyish fancy, that her heart had whispered a voiceless plea against my desolation; that the ills of life came and went as shadows; that joy should some time take the place of mourning. Such were the thoughts, profound and almost holy, that my heart read from her brown eyes, and such the hope caught from her baby face.

My life with Dr. Robert was very simple, the greater part of the day was occupied with my studies. About two hours in the afternoon I was allowed to do as I liked.

One bright morning in May Dr. Robert dismissed me and retired to his room to sleep off a headache, he said. Rejoicing in my freedom, I bent my steps toward the heart of the city. A sound of unusual commotion attracted my attention. I recognized in a moment that much-to-be-dreaded evil, a riot. As the mob moved down the broad street, I grew frightened and fled to a neighboring shade tree, up which I hastily clambered.

There was something demoniacal in the exultation with which the lower class witnessed the misfortunes of those whom, a week before, they had acknowledged their benefactors and superiors. I gathered, from what I could now and then catch from the excited voices below me, that the unfortunates seated in the vehicles in the midst of the throng were banished to Ship Island, henceforth exiled from home and country. To me it was a solemn, fearful sight—nothing more. I realized nothing of the terrible conflict, nothing of the fierce passions enlisted in the struggle, nothing of that remorseless vengeance with which the rabble were hounded on.

The uncertainty of human greatness and the degradation of the higher class seemed a most glorious recompense to those whose stations debarred them from all association. They witnessed the crucifixion of these souls with a joy born of fiends.

The parade of soldiers—horse, foot and artillery, that scattered the mob right and left, gave the scene a character of public justice; but the horrible mob, retreating, shouting ribald songs and coarse jests, suggested the idea of public vengeance.

As the procession stretched its length past me, I recognized with dismay the little “Duchess” seated in a vehicle beside the gray haired

lady; they were among the unfortunates destined for Ship Island.

The Duchess scrambled to her feet and stood on tip-toe and, taking from her handkerchief a tiny Confederate flag, she waved it round and round, crying in shrill childish treble :

“Hurrah for the Southern Confederacy!”

The lady beside her reached out a hand for the flag.

“Hurrah for Jeff Davis!” the child shouted, struggling to her feet again. “Hurrah for the boys in gray!” she cried, holding aloft the tiny cross of St. Andrew.

The white-haired lady drew the little rebel down upon her knee while a Federal soldier demanded in no pleasant terms the surrender of the flag.

In an instant the Duchess had snapped off the slender staff and crowded the offending emblem into her pretty mouth. In vain the soldier swore and threatened. The child closed her red lips and sat with distended cheeks and defiant eyes, shaking her little fist almost in the soldier’s face.

Again, with threats and oaths, the poor, little flag was demanded.

“Leave the child alone!” commanded an officer. “I don’t like this business, anyway,” he muttered.

The cavalcade moved on, the Duchess kept her flag.

“How lovely she is! Such changing color and fragile delicacy, such a sweet, pure face!” The officer half turned in his saddle to catch a last glimpse of the little Hebe and smiled as his thoughts flew back to the distant home, where, in faith most holy, a little child asked God’s love and protection for him. His heart grew tender and his eyes dim as the memory came upon him; he put up his hand involuntarily—yes, it was there, the picture of his own little girl, whose brown eyes were so strangely like the little rebel’s. Next to his heart lay the fair baby face. Its presence had accomplished a worthy mission; it had melted the father’s heart into a tolerance almost kind for this little daughter of the despised Southern aristocrat.

I did not tell Dr. Robert where I had been or what I had seen. Had I been less occupied with my own foolish dreaming I must have seen evidences of Dr. Robert’s sufferings. When I had arrived at home he was not in and I wandered down the street and back again. This time I was startled by seeing a sentinel pacing up and down the brick walk, between the front steps and the gate.

“Halt!” he shouted.

“This is where I live—my home,” I meekly ventured.

"Get out, you rebel upstart!" he cried, leveling his gun upon me.

"Mammy!" I shouted.

"Dry up!"

"Mammy! Mammee!" I cried, desperately. "Oh, *Mammy!*"

"Whotcher hollerin' 'bout, son? I ain't deaf ef I is in de prime o' de yaller leaf. Com'm'ere, man-boy. Come to mammy, sonny!"

"You come here, mammy," I cried out, in terror, as the sentinel made faces at me.

"Tubby sho', son, mammy's comin'."

"Go back!" from the sentinel.

"De stair hit riz in Betluham,
De stair hit riz in de mawnin'."

mammy sang, as she leisurely sauntered down toward the gate, utterly ignoring the soldier's presence.

"Go back, old monkey! Don't you hear?" he cried, indignantly.

"Who, in de name o' Gawd, is yo' talkin' to?" mammy quietly asked, still coming nearer.

"You."

"*Me?* Whotcher biznis wid dis Ferginny nigger lady?"

"Go back into the house."

"Dunno's I hafter."

"I'll make you go!" declared the sentinel, losing control of his temper.

"Dunno's you kin. S'pozin' yo' try hit."

Just as she reached the gate the soldier slapped my face and gave me a kick that sent me off the banquette into the street.

"What's dat you doin', man?" Mammy indignantly demanded. "Who's dat you's fight-in', you whitetrash Yankee? Dontcher skanlize my chile er puttin' your ole narsty han's on dis lam'—kickin' er quality chile!" she exclaimed, glaring wrathfully at the soldier. "Jes same's er body'd kick er hawg! Come on, sonny-man."

I rushed into her outstretched arms.

"Put that child down!" the soldier shouted.

"Dotcher gimme no more your slackjaw, Mr. Smart-Ellick; kicked you same's er hawg," and the faithful soul held me closer.

"Put that boy down!" again commanded the sentinel.

"Shet up!"

"All right, old monkey."

Mammy took my hand and started through the open gateway, then lifting me she held me in her arms. I, sobbing upon her shoulder, felt comforted.

"Mammy's sweet man-boy," she cooed. "Got er kickin' same's a hawg, er-er dawg," she complained, patting my back. "Done grown so big an' long cain't skasely tote dis man-boy," she grunted getting a new hold and settling my cap on my head.

"Will you leave that boy alone?" cried the sentinel from the gate.

"No, I wont! Now you got it! No, I wont!"

"All right, old monkey," he replied with an unpleasant laugh as mammy walked slowly toward the house. The next moment the spiteful ring of a gun and sharp swish of a ball came like lightning and mammy staggered and fell, clasping me close in her arms. Another loud report and her life blood gushed over my white blouse.

"Sonny!" she gasped. "Is you hurted, honey?"

A smothered cry escaped her lips as she half arose, but to fall back. "Sonny-boy!" cried the faithful soul, "tell mammy is you hurted?"

With the assistance of the servants and Dr. Robert she was carried into the house where we watched and waited. Dr. Robert with two other physicians were untiring in their efforts and nothing that human skill could avail or human hands perform was left undone; but on the third night mammy's loyal, unselfish soul was freed and I felt indeed alone. I was revengeful in my grief; and determined to find the commanding General, and report the murderous sentinel.

"It will only make a bad matter worse, my boy," Dr. Robert said. "Don't do it, Harry."

"What shall I do?" I sobbed, as bitter memories crowded my mind.

"Pray, my boy, pray without ceasing—pray with your whole heart for strength and courage. Pray for both as for one you loved best. Do you understand, Harry?"

I vainly endeavored to glean a grain of comfort, and held on to Dr. Robert's sleeve.

"Listen to me, little boy." He raised my head. "I shall be absent the entire day. I must see Honorine and Celeste. Perhaps I may not return for two days—if I have an opportunity of going to the plantation, I shall improve it. Mr. Lascelle is having trouble, Harry." Dr. Robert drew me nearer. "If I am not with you in a week from to-day, you must go to the Sacred Heart and report my absence to the Reverend Mother. She will take care of you—you will be with Honorine and Celeste. Good-bye, Harold. Stay in the house and grounds. Do not wander away again; old Louis and Mary will amuse you. Good-bye, little boy." Dr. Robert's hand trembled as it lay upon my head.

"Remember, Harry, if I am not here by Monday, go to the convent. Old Louis will take you," he called from the terrace.

My heart was full to bursting. I resolved to obey Dr. Robert's instructions, and wept silently as I watched him pass out of the gate

and disappear around the corner. It was a heavy, cloudy morning and the sound of martial music came slowly, but distinctly into my window. I wandered about the house and grounds, talking with Uncle Louis, the gardener, and singing plantation hymns with Aunt Mary in the kitchen. Dr. Robert did not return that evening nor the next. He had been gone an entire week, when I grew desperate.

"I want Honorine," I complained to Uncle Louis. "Take me to the convent to Honorine and Celeste," I insisted.

"Gawd unly knows whar is Misson Rene an' Missle Es now, sonny."

"They're at the Sacred Heart."

"Dee wos, son; but whar is dee now? Folks is plum broke up in dis day an' time. You's here one day an' dar de naix day. But doe, Misson Rene ain't takin' no foolishhnis offen nobody, I'se knewn Misson Rene long time, son."

"But Dr. Robert said I must go," I insisted.

"Missle Es is fur diffunt," Uncle Louis said musingly. "Bein' de baby gal make er diffunce, but doe Missle Es ain't like Misson Rene, no way or no how. Why, son, when dees leetle tinchy gals Misson Rene go roun' wid dem black eyes er hern lookin' an' er

sarchin' same's er neagle an' solum! Son, Misson Rene's de solemes' shile on de ribber! Same's er owel, mon. Missle Es er trottin' roun' er smilin' here an' er chattin' an' laughin' dar; but doe her hade is mighty nigh red also. I ain't so sho' but hit 'pear like Missle Es is your mudder's favorite."

"But, Uncle Louis——"

"Hit's dis way, son. De roses hafter be dug into deep 'roun' de rootses; but doe de 'landers hafter——"

"I don't care anyting about the flowers. I want t' go to the convent," I fairly shouted.

"Huh, folks 'll 'low you's a gal den," he chuckled. "Unly gal people stays dar."

That settled it.

I thereupon resolved to search the city for Dr. Robert, and as soon as Uncle Lewis went into the kitchen I set out on my mission. I had wandered as far as the principal street when I saw an officer step from a carriage and drop from his hand a well-filled pocket-book. I picked it up and, following him into the building, handed the package to him with my best bow. He took it without a word.

"Who is he?" I whispered to a bystander.

"The General commanding the department of the Gulf," answered the man, adding in a whisper: "He is meaner than Satan—has no respect for himself or any one else. He had

as lief murder a baby as shoot a dog." I looked at the short, stout figure and wondered if it could be true, and then hurried into the street.

"Harry!" called a voice at my side.

I turned and recognized an old friend of my mother's.

"Harry, my dear little boy, what are you doing down here? You knew they had imprisoned Dr. Robert?"

I shook my head.

"I think," she said, after a moment's thought, "I think you had best go home with me. Where are the girls, Harry?"

"Sacred Heart," was all I could say.

"Come, Harry."

"I want Dr. Robert, and Honorine and Celeste—and grandmamma," I sobbed.

"Go home, dear, and ask old Louis to take you to the convent," she advised. "I would send Pierre, but am afraid to be out without him. Come to me this evening, Harry. We will talk over your troubles."

The lady drew down her veil and walked up the street, followed by her old servant. I ran hastily homeward. At last, out of breath, I reached the street in which we lived. The gate was wide open and a sentinel was marching up and down the walk.

He was a large, solemn-looking fellow, in a dirty uniform of blue.

"Halt!" he cried, as I ran up the steps.

"This is my home," I tremblingly announced, remembering mammy's tragic death.

"Where is your father, bub?"

"Dead."

"And your mother?"

"Dead."

"Whose place is this, then?" he inquired.

"My own home."

"Hain't you no gyardeen?"

"What?" I asked in wonder.

"Who looks after you?"

"Dr. Robert is all I have left," I sobbed out, as a flood of recollection swept over me.

"There, there, don't cry, bub. It's an everlastin' waste of time, space and opportunity. Don't take nothin' to heart, bub," the sentinel advised. "How long's your folks been dead?" the rough voice softening. "Tell me all about it bub; mebbe it'll ease your feelin's. I've had trouble myself."

"The voice of this big, rough soldier modulated into a sympathetic cadence for my sorrows. I poured out my chapter of woes into his ears.

"The Johnnies done it, bub; the Johnnies done it!" he exclaimed, slapping the steps with his open hand. "They'll do anything, Lord!

Once and occasionally you'll find a Johnnie who's a fine fellow, but oftener you'll find him too stuck up to speak t' a Yankee doodle. The Johnnies air a curi's set. Lord! strange and pecooliar!"

"What is a Johnnie?" I inquired, ashamed of my ignorance concerning the races.

"Lord!" the soldier exclaimed, giving the step upon which he sat another blow and looking doubtfully into my face. "You are a Johnnie yourself, bub—a young Johnnie."

"I beg your pardon. My name isn't Johnnie," I declared, farther than ever from elucidation.

"Did I say your name *was* Johnnie?" A laugh, loud and hearty and contagious, shook his huge anatomy.

"Is your commanding General a Johnnie?" I meekly said, when the laugh had subsided into a series of chucklings.

"Lord! no, not any of the Johnnie about him," and he lowered himself upon the steps. "A Johnnie is no more and no less than a Confed."

"A Confederate soldier?" I asked, as a glimmer of light stole into the riddle.

"Precisely so, bub."

"Then it's nice to be a Johnnie," I smiled. Well—mebbe so. You folks down here can be as aggervatin' as any set I ever see.

There's a couple of sides to every question, ain't that so? Now, bub, s'pose these Confeds had a' behaved themselves. Then, we will go on s'posin' our folks had a' behaved themselves. In such a case me and you'd never been acquainted, would we bub? You're all a funny folk anyway. Why bub," here he seemed suddenly amused, "they 'tote' the horses to water in Virginia."

"They can't" I asserted, then wondered if "Jack, the giant-killer," was a Virginian, and if that State was a land of Goliahs.

"They say they do," laughed the fellow. "Now, bub, good bye. There comes my relief. Keep up a good heart, bub. You're a nice little fellow—considerin' you're a Johnnie. I'll remember you in my prayers," he added, laughing as he shook my hand.

The next morning, at an early hour, old Louis and I presented ourselves at the prison gate for admittance, which was denied. I determined to see the General himself, vaguely hoping he would grant my petition. The General's office was in the St. Charles Hotel, and I shivered when I read from a placard in the window this sentence in large print:

"THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE IN THE VENOM OF
A HE OR SHE ADDER.

Of the meaning it conveyed, I had but a vague idea, for I was only a child, but the

whole world, shocked and outraged, denounced as with one voice, the infamous "Woman Order" which I read from the placard in the window of the St. Charles Hotel—an order issued by the General Commanding the Department of the Gulf. This General's office was a long, broad room. Tables, chairs and desks were scattered about the apartment in direst confusion. The General sat at a table near the center of the room and on that table lay a brace of revolvers and a few newspapers. A little back of him sat a man—"a short-hand reporter," some one whispered. I was suddenly thrust into the street, as I stood gazing into the window. Uncle Louis humbly begged an interview, but was kicked off the banquette. There was nothing left but to return home. Home? When we reached our gate we were greeted with:

"What do you want? Get out!" from a loud-voiced, over-dressed woman.

Alas! I had no home. Like thousands of others in that ill-fated city, I had been robbed of home. Boy, as I was, I felt the injustice, but was powerless. I gazed through a mist of tears at the loved, familiar pictures--the old banana tree, whose broad leaves reached toward me in friendly sympathy; the clumps of white lilies reminded me of my poor dead mother; the sweet violets, blooming so fragrant

and modest, lifted their blue petals from the border beds, making me think of Celeste's blue eyes, and as I caught a glimpse of a tall palm in the background I felt as if I must die, for I always had associated that tree with our stalely Honorine.

Then I turned my back upon the ashes of love and hope and hurried away to hide the tears that almost suffocated me. Hour after hour I walked the streets. The mere act of motion seemed to divert my grief, and it was only when footsore and weary I could walk no longer, that my sorrows flowed back upon my soul and extinguished every spark of hope. I had wandered into an unfamiliar part of the outskirts of the city. Here and there people had joined their families, while others hurried or lingered near some corner discussing the questions of the day. In the dim distance, afar in the gathering twilight, down toward the river, I thought I heard the voice of a seraph. Stopping, I held my breath and listened. Where had I heard it before?

“Weep no mo’, ma la’-dee,
Weep no mo’ ter day,
We’ll sing one song of dee ole Kaintuckee home,
Dee ole Kaintuckee home fur er way-ee.”

In a flash of memory I saw the plantation—Uncle Ike—the bayou and all. Forgetting

tired feet and heaviness of heart, I ran toward the sound as

“We’ll hunt no mo’ for de ’possum an’ de coon”
came to me like the echo of an old familiar voice, or the fragrance of flowers long ago faded.

CHAPTER V.

I fell exhausted after my chase for a will-o'-the-wisp. No more heard I of the song. A sense of loneliness again overcame me. It was this consciousness that weighed me down more than any other feeling, and I felt with what devotion I could have served him, who would but treat me with the kindness he might bestow on his dog. I fancied with what zeal I could descend to very slavery for one word of affection. My heart was hungry—my life a dreary solitude.

The streets were crowded with people as I limped back into the city. Groups were gathered here and there, listening to some orator of the mob, or hearing the newspapers read. I tried to rid myself of my desolation by forcing myself into the crowd, at the imminent risk of being trodden under foot, to feel myself one of the people, and to inspire my soul with an interest in what was going on, but in vain. I knew nothing of the topics under discussion,

and no one noticed me. High-sounding words and phrases greeted me strangely. They spoke of fraternity, of that brotherhood that linked man to man; of equality, that made men equal, and social sharers in this world's goods; of liberty, that insured freedom of thought and action, and gave vent to every noble inspiration and generous deed. For a moment, carried away by the glorious illusion, I forgot my solitary and isolated condition, and felt proud of my heritage as an American-born youth. Something in the voice of the speaker arrested my attention. A strangely familiar ring in his voice awoke a curiosity to get a glimpse of his face. I looked about me. What countenances met my gaze! Their bloated features, unnatural eyes glowing with intemperance, their oaths, their gestures, their very voices, were terrible. I moved out of the crowd as fast as possible, and again wandered aimlessly about the streets. Once I ran against old Louis.

"Uncle Louis," I said, clinging to him as to a saving grace, "can we never get our home again?"

"I'se 'feard not, sonny," he responded with a groan. "De man what tuck it is dat cock-eyed Jinral's brudder, an' I spec de game is up f' us, sonny," he said, with new-born energy. "Did you hear ole 'Pollus noratin' t' dat crowd er white trash? I sw'ar! 'Pollus

“speak plum purty and sensible f’ a ha’f nigger. Dat was ole ’Pollus er splavercatin’ and ’zortin son! I ain’t gitter speak t’ him yit. Huh! ’Pollus mighty spry and mannish f’ a ha’f nigger.”

Again we were separated for a moment in the surge of the multitude, then the faithful old negro caught me in his arms.

“Le’s git erway fum here, Harry, boy. Dis one tarryfyin’ place now, honey. Did you know ’bout dey hung er man t’day? A po’ man but er mighty good man, son.”

“Why did they hang him, Uncle Louis?” I asked, nestling closer to him.

“Jes cause he tuck de flag offen de Ment, son, an’ Lawd! he’s po’ wife an’ chillen! Sonny I tells you hit’s plum scan’lis. Lawd! Lawdy massy!” Uncle Louis groaned in anguish of spirit.

“I want to see the place, Uncle Louis,” I said, wondering by what process a man is executed by hanging.

“‘Tain’t no place f’ you to see, sonny, boy, ’tain’t no fitten place f’ to be gwine. Lawd! yander’s ole ’Pollus now—tryin’ t’ haave hisse’f like er white man! Jes’ look at ’Pollus, honey-boy.”

We were outside an eating house, away down the street. I looked through the window and saw Apollo, the plantation blacksmith, seated at a table eating his supper.

"Jes' walk right in, sonny, an' tole ole 'Pollus howdy," whispered Uncle Louis.

"Will you wait for me," I asked, loth to leave him.

"Sartin son, sartin. What I gwine t' run off for, and whar I got t' run?" the old man answered dolefully.

I walked into the room and elbowed my way to Apollo's side.

"Howdy, Uncle 'Pollus!" I cried as I reached him.

"Hello! Why, it's Harry!" he exclaimed. "Howdy, sonny. Howdy, an' double howdy!" He held my hand in his broad, rough palm, and looked me over, then seated me on his knees. "Gawd bless dis boy! Sonny, how come you out in de night a'r? How's your mudder, an' de young mistises, mon? Lawd! honey, whot's de matter wid you?" he asked, as he trotted me on his knee.

I burst into tears, and laid my head against his shoulder. At this moment old Louis appeared.

"Don't ax dat po' chile so many squestins, 'Pollus. He been through de fire an' likewise de furnish. Sonny's done plum broke up, and I is, too. Here, Harry, son, eat some supper. Ain't de leetle chap hawngry? Eat all you kin honey, an' den we will have er chat," lifting me to a chair. I was hungry, and enjoyed my

supper. Uncle Louis joined me, and Apollo paid the bill. Then we went out in the clear moonlight.

“Dat chile plum wore out Hain’t got no place to res hise’f,” complained old Louis.

Whatever may have been prison vigilance in our city, I ascertained from what I could understand of the conversation kept up by Apollo and Uncle Louis that Dr. Robert had made his escape. We halted near the Custom House, where Apollo, who had carried me on his shoulder, lifted me, with a grunt of relief, to the ground, and I fell asleep with my head pillowed on his arm. I know not how long I slept, but when the damp chill of night awoke me no one was near.

Again I started in fear and trembling, and walked on and on. Twice I folded my hands and repeated my Ave Maria, finding at last a structure I then believed to be the gallows on which perished, a few short hours before, an innocent, unoffending citizen. All was perfectly plain in the moonlight. My imagination painted a picture weird and ghastly. I fancied I saw the victim of military nemesis pale and wan and hopeless—could hear the cries and execrations of an outraged multitude. Overcome with an awesome fear, I knelt upon the damp earth and tried to pray, but terror was too powerful to allow my thoughts to take this

direction, and half fainting from fear and exhaustion, I lay upon the ground and slept. Not a dream crossed my slumbers, nor did I wake until dawn, when the rumbling of the wide-awake city aroused me. I do not know why nor whence came the feeling, but after I said an Ave Maria and repeated a hymn I arose from the ground and looked about me with a more daring and courageous spirit than my soul had ever before known. The first bright rays of the May sunshine were gilding the domes and spires of the city, and the fresh gulf breeze was invigorating and cheering.

At the time of which I write our city knew, in its fullest sense, the entire definition of the word, terror. By the agency of this power, and the threats of denunciation, was everything carried on, not only in public departments, but in common, every day life. Among the lower class fathers used this unholy influence toward their children, children toward their parents. Mothers coerced their daughters, daughters in turn braved the authority of their mothers. The tribunal of mock justice, open to all, scattered its decrees with a reckless cruelty, denying to-day what it had declared yesterday—at last obliterating every trace of right or principle in a people who now lived for the passing hour, and who were fast losing faith in any future. Among

the children of the rabble, even in play, this reckless, desperate feeling gained a ready footing.

The tyrant urchin, whose ingenuity enabled him to lord it over his playfellows, enacted the despot's part. Children are not slow in acquiring evil, and soon learn to domineer over their vassals with all the insolence and easy assumption of seeming power.

This period was essentially one of action, not of reflection. Events seemed to fashion themselves at the will of him who ruled from the St. Charles Hotel. No one had the daring to gainsay his edicts, with Ship Island or the scaffold as the forfeits of his boldness. The natives and citizens, exhausted in soul, seemed too poor-spirited to stem the tide.

Nero fiddled when Rome burned. The General Commanding the Department of the Gulf smiled benignly upon insult, rapine and murder. Clad in a little brief authority he wielded his despot's sceptre with an air of a conquerer, while issuing his infamous Woman Order, which aroused the horror and disgust of his own party, to say naught of the maledictions of the civilized world. What had I, a boy, without home or parents, to hope for?

The vagueness of my prospects served but to extend the horizon of futurity before me, and I fancied a thousand positions of distinc-

tion I might yet call my own. A desire for fame, or its poor counterfeit, notoriety, seemed to my ambitious soul to be the most enviable of all possessions. It mattered little by what merit it was attained, for in that fickle time great vices were as highly prized as transcendent abilities, and one might as well be illustrious by crime as by ability. Such had not been the teachings of Dr. Robert, but they were the lessons that the city dinned into my ears unceasingly. Reputation was of no avail in this city, where all was change and vacillation. What was idolized to-day was execrated to-morrow. The hero of yesterday was the victim of military vengeance to-day. The success of the moment was everything.

The streets were crowded as I passed along, and a light rain was falling. Groups of people were gathered at every corner, and by their eager looks and gestures showed that some event of great importance had occurred.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"Another lot of people been banished to Ship Island," answered a workingman.

As yet men only spoke in whispers and broken phrases; many were weeping and saying a last word with desperate fervor—bitter farewells. But few dared to trust themselves in outspoken sympathy, for none knew what spies were watching, or if the tyrant had conceived new tortures or indignities.

While I listened to the tidings, which in half whispers and broken sentences reached my ears, the music of a band sounded in close proximity, and immediately the head of a military column appeared. In the center of the cavalcade were the vehicle containing the exiles—old gentlemen, delicate ladies and little children, sentenced to Ship Island for one, three or five years of hard labor. A battery of light artillery followed, and as the procession advanced, crowds receded, and gradually the street was left free to the armed force.

Though frightened and trembling, I continued to gaze at the glitter of gold and scarlet until a strong hand grasped my collar, and by a sudden and painful jerk, swung me up to a seat upon a caisson. I rapidly and mutely repeated my Ave Maria, which was interrupted by "See here, little Johnnie, I'll give you a job," from the man beside me.

CHAPTER VI.

Six magnificent horses were before me!

Six great, well-kept black horses!

Horses and dogs I had always adored, and one of my pet fancies was to one day own all the black horses and every individual dog on the globe.

I watched these proud stepping chargers

with delight, forgetting for the moment all else.

"What's dat?" a familiar voice shouted from the banquette, as the procession moved on. I, from my position, gazed enchanted. "Whar's you, sonny? An' whar's you er perusin' to?"

I recognized Uncle Louis standing near Apollo, under the shelter of a magnolia tree.

"In de rain, too—same's er duck! Huh, er ridin' wid er Yainky at dat!" he growled. Apollo's tall figure was at my side in a moment.

"Here, Harry, come wid Unk Pollus, sonny." His powerful arms bore me from the caisson and on his broad shoulders. Then he strode on again, old Louis following.

"Son's sottin' up dar same's er ossifer hisse'f, son was," old Louis said, with an air of pride.

"Son's gwine t' stay wid Unk Pollus, ain't cher, honey?" asked Apollo, shifting me to the other shoulder.

"Hand that boy back here, you contra-band," the man on the caisson called out.

"What's say, mawster?" from Uncle Louis, as the procession paused a moment.

"Fetch that child here."

"Whuf fer, mawster?"

"I want him."

"You see, son's all we got lef'," Apollo said, turning toward the man.

"An' we's all son's got, too, also," old Louis sighed.

"Fetch him here!"

"Mister," began Apollo, "this is all the white fambly we got left and we boun' to take care of sonny—this boy," he explained, patting my foot.

"Maybe heer some son's kinnery f'om de furrin sho'. You 'member mawster's er Yainky, mawster was," half whispered Uncle Louis, who entertained an embryo romance in his muddled, woolly old pate.

"Son," Apollo said, resting me in his arms, "had you druther go with us or with that chonder man?"

I clasped my arms tight about his neck, and held out one foot to Uncle Louis, in token of undying affection.

"Dar, now!" Uncle Louis exclaimed fondling my foot.

"Son's er sho 'nuf joe-darter f'om way back. Son's know hees nigger is hees bes' frien's, doncher, man-boy?"

Apollo again hoisted me to his shoulder, holding on to my feet.

"Where are we going, Unk Pollus?" I inquired, as we trudged on.

"Gwine home, sonny-boy," quickly responded Uncle Louis.

"Home," he repeated, "sich es hit air, whole lot er cabins sottin' 'roun', same's er whole passel er was' nes'es—all stuck up t' gedder jes same's dirt-dobbers er—er was'es nes'. You gwine laf, aincher, man?"

The rain now descended in torrents. I was still on Appolo's shoulder, with old Louis' coat wrapped about me.

"Le's stop sommers," panted old Louis. "Son's sho gwine t' be sick," he complained.

Apollo stopped under an awning and, divesting me of the coat, placed his ear on my chest and listened.

"All right, sonny," he said, cheerfully. "Will you take some quinine f' Unk Pollus now?"

Just in front of our group an officer had dismounted and now stood near us, under shelter.

"What is it?" he asked taking off my cap.

"Sonny's got wet an' I'm feard he'll get sick," Apollo explained, listening again at my chest.

"Where's the boy's mother? Why is he here?"

Apollo, after bidding Uncle Louis to take care of me, beckoned the officer out of ear shot, and, I felt sure, gave him a detailed account of our trouble. Uncle Louis meanwhile entertained me with a thrilling version of the

"Probable Son," who, when he "riz up" and went to his father, was killed, while the fatted calf was being kissed, and the father was adorning his little fingers with rings.

"Sonny-boy," Apollo called. "Commere, son."

I scrambled from old Louis' knee and ran to Apollo.

"Son, this gentleman wants you to board with him till Dr. Robert comes. Our shanty ain't no fitten place for you, honey, an I spec' you better go."

My heart sank within me. All peace and security was again drifting from me.

"Son, I'll come to see you," he began.

"I want Unk Louis, too," I said.

"He can go."

"I want grandma and Honorine and Celeste and Dr. Robert—."

"Any one else?" the officer smiled.

"You ain't squainted wid our gal-folks, I reckon," Uncle Louis hastened to explain, "Misson Rene mighty fine young 'oman. She's long an' slim an' got de blackes' eyes. Lawd! Misson Rene look at you same's er neagle. Now, Missle Es' de baby gal, she's er smilin' all de time an' er sassin' somebody an' er projekin' wid son. De ole Mistis useter call Missle Es 'de sunlight,' and den she 'low as how Misson Rene's 'de sollum midnight.' Our

fambly is de quality, dey is dat! Misson Rene's de sollum midnight an' Missle Es' de sunlight; ole Mistis say so herse'f," he added as conclusive proof.

The negro is by nature loquacious, and no amount of ignorance or mental obtuseness has ever yet proved the slightest bar to the impulse to talk, to friend or foe—talk he must and will. So Uncle Louis opened his mouth and spoke freely, fully and without reserve to this officer, whom he now beheld for the first time.

"He'll letch'er ride a hawse, sonny," Apollo urged as a last persuasion.

"An' have a dawg—a leetle bitsy dawg," added Uncle Louis.

I agreed to go, stipulating that I should see Apollo once a week and Uncle Louis every day.

"We los' son once," he explained, "kaze son move from whar we lef' him; but doe we had t' leave him dar, kaze dat ashcat driv us off. I ain't usen t' ashcats," he complacently observed, shaking the rain from his hat.

In looking back, after a long lapse of years, to this period of my life, I wonder how I remained so contentedly within the Union barracks.

Uncle Louis was with me every day, and to his thoughtful care I owed much of my contentment. "Son" was his chief pleasure. The

soldiers watched his devotion to me, and my affection for the old negro, with wonder. They were in a chronic state of amazement at the affectionate friendliness existing between master and slave.

A uniform of blue now adorned my person and I was the special care of Major K—, who, though belonging to the Department of the Gulf, was deserving of the grand old name of gentleman. I had not seen Dr. Robert for quite a while, and accepted, with all the gratitude of my childish nature, and of a lonely waif, the kindness shown me by Major K—.

One of the most remarkable phases of this war was the change it produced in all social relations by a substitution of the Confederacy for the closer and dearer ties of friends and family. The Confederacy was everything—the family nothing. Every generous wish, every proud thought, every high ambition or noble endeavor belonged to the Confederacy.

The gentle, tenderly reared daughters of this sunny land made untold sacrifices of luxury and comfort for the cause for which they worked, hoped and prayed. What the South may have gained by this devotion certain it is that among some classes all home affections were wrecked, and the humble and unobtrusive virtues of domestic life weighed insignificantly beside the grand displays of patriotic devotion

which were each day exhibited, even under the argus eyes of the General commanding the Department of the Gulf.

Notwithstanding the uniform kindness shown me by Major K. and the untiring devotion of Uncle Louis, with attention and kindness from every officer and soldier in the barracks, I grew home-sick, and longed for a sight of a home face. I wanted Dr. Robert, and sighed for my dear grandmother and pretty cousins.

I had received one letter from Celeste, sweet, blue-eyed Celeste! At last I made up my mind to seek Dr. Robert; but where?

My uniform readily gained me the liberty of the city, and the Major had presented me with a fleet, gentle pony, which I christened "Dixie." One day, when Uncle Louis had gone fishing, I set out, accompanied by an orderly, on a visit to the little church in the environs of the city. I rode slowly by my old home, noting every change with a sinking heart. The oleanders and orange trees nodded their blooming heads in welcome over the low iron fence. I inhaled the perfume of the rose thicket in the corner, and looked for the old banana tree. Alas, it was gone!

I quickened my pace and rode, with tears streaming down my face, to the little church.

What impulse led me, I know not, but I was seized with a desire to enter. The gate

was ajar as of old, and pushing it open I led my pony into the enclosure—the orderly remaining outside.)

I walked to the door of the church, which I found closed and locked. Walking around the ivy-clad porch I noticed foot-prints in the soft, damp soil. Investigating further, I observed the torn tangle of the ivy overgrowing a window.

Climbing up among the vines I entered the dark, sombre chapel. As my footsteps echoed through the silent building, I felt that sense of awe and reverence so inseparably connected with a place of worship and which is still more impressive as we stand alone in the “dim, religious light.”

The present was less with me than the past. There was the pew the Duchess and her grandmother used to occupy. Here was the pillar beside which I stood spell-bound, gazing into her Peri face, whose beauty arrested the thoughts which should have wandered heavenward and made my muttered prayers an offering to herself.

There—the same footstool I had so often placed under her little feet. There, the very bouquet her hands, divinely fair, had placed beneath the shrine, withered and faded. But where were they whose burdened souls breathed here their sobbing devotions? Lingering in exile or imprisonment, dragging out

lives of anxiety and misery. What was the sustaining element of such martyrdom and devotion? Was it religion or loyalty?

True religion undefiled, with strength born of loyalty to right and country, bore them up; fortified their souls through crucifixion, and enabled them to face death itself. With this beautiful faith so ennobling, and loyalty so grand and true—the South, this hospitable land of sunshine and flowers, was of one mind and heart.

While thus meditating, I advanced toward the altar.

I was startled to find upon it two lighted candles. In a moment I felt that Dr. Robert was near—had come to celebrate a mass. I knew what an earnest Christian he was, and how he loved this little temple, associated as it was with all the joys and sorrows of his long life. I knelt before the altar to say my *Ave Maria*, and to ask for Dr. Robert's safety, feeling assured in the beautiful faith of childhood that I had only to ask. Suddenly a door opened beside the altar and Dr. Robert, in the vestments of a Roman priest, stood before me.

CHAPTER VII.

His features, wan and wasted as they were, still wore the old expression of calm dignity, and by his look I saw that he would not

suffer this sacred spot to be profaned by any outburst of feeling.

"Harry, my dear little boy," Dr. Robert spoke calmly, "Harry, let us pray for those who have brought about our undone condition."

"Would you offer a prayer for those who murdered my father and for the man who robbed us of our home? I can't."

"Harold!"

"I can't pray for any of them; nor for that fellow who killed poor mammy," I sobbed, as the vision was recalled.

"And who more need the intercession of the saints? Who have ever been called to judgment with such crimes to expiate? Who have so widowed and orphaned the South and so desecrated her altar? Fortunately a few remain who may implore pardon for their iniquities. You knew of the poor fellow who was hanged?"

I nodded.

"Let us recite the litany for the dead."

He reverently bowed his silvered head and began the impressive service. As I knelt beside the altar railing, and heard the prayers, which, with deep devotion, he uttered, I could not help feeling the contrast between that evidence of Christian charity and the uncompromising cruelties and injustices of the "powers that be."

“And now come with me, sonny-boy,” Dr. Robert said, when mass was completed. “Here in this little sacristy we are safe from molestation. None will think of us here.”

As he spoke he drew me nearer, and together we went into the small apartment where the decorations of the church were kept.

“Here we are safe,” he said, as we seated ourselves upon a narrow bench; which was the only furniture in the room.

“I am glad you came to me to-day, Harry. I wanted to see you, yet dared not seek you. To-morrow, my boy, we must leave this place. I have it all arranged; we will seek an asylum beyond the seas.”

“Where?”

“The Brothers of the House of Jesus will gladly receive us.”

“But where?”

“There monastery is in the wilds of Cuba, and there, beloved by each other, we will live in peace and security.”

“A convent?”

“A monastery, my poor boy. We need not take the vows of their Order, which is one of the strictest of all religious institutions, but we may claim their hospitality and protection—neither will be denied us. Think what a blessed life that will be, Harry, to live under the same roof with these holy men, and imbibe from them that peace of mind which holiness alone bestows.”

I shook my head.

“To awake to the sweet notes of the pealing organs,” he hastened to say. “And to close our eyes in slumber to the solemn liturgies still chanting; to feel the influence of devotion on every side; to see the sacred relics, whose miracles have attested the true faith in ages past.”

I sat in silence, for, in truth, I felt none of the enthusiasm with which Dr. Robert sought to inspire me. He read my tell-tale face, and endeavored to picture a monk’s life as a charming, much-to-be desired existence, embellished by all the graces of literature and art, and adorned by the pleasures of intellectual intercourse. Poetry, romance, scenery, all these were pressed into the service of his persuasions; but how useless!

“Will grandma go?” I asked, hoping yet not to disappoint him.

“No, no.”

“Honorine or Celeste?”

“No, my poor little boy, no.”

I could not think of leaving the city without my relatives. Dearly as I loved Dr. Robert, my ideas for my own future were decidedly and entirely of a military turn. I stood erect before him, arrayed in a uniform of blue, as proud of my trousers as was Hercules of his lion-skin. I tried to listen attentively, but my look

of inattention illustrated to Dr. Robert his failure. I could see, in the increasing pallor of his face, and his quivering lips, what his lack of authority was costing him. Dear Dr. Robert! How my childish heart ached with and for him.

"Alas! alas! I might have known it!" he cried regretfully. "The work of ruin has begun. Your mind is corrupted and the fountain of truth and virtue defiled at its very source. Oh! Harold! I had never thought this possible of you. Harry, my son, my son!"

As David of old wept over the erring Absalom, so Dr. Robert bewailed my worldliness. A burst of grief overcame him, and for some time he could not speak. At last he lifted his dear, white head, and looked into my face.

"Harry, my dear child," he moaned, "the life I have painted seems unworthy of your thoughts. You are only a child, with a child's idea of greatness being centered in mere notoriety. When you are older you will see things in a different light. This monastic life did not prove ignoble nor irksome to Chrysostrom nor Augustine, nor to the blessed saints of our church, the eldest-born of Christianity."

I understood a little of what he intended to convey.

"Yours, little boy, is, perhaps, not the age nor the era in which to hope for better things. Your poor little heart yearns for heroic action. Your spirit is set upon high ambitions.

I pray a thousand blessings upon you, my dear Harold."

Then suddenly he asked: "Where do you live, Sonnie? Do Louis and Apollo provide for you?"

"Unk 'Pollus pays my board and Unk Louis takes care of me. Unk 'Pollus bought my new clothes."

"Ah, in pants, I see. You seem much taller. Who cut your hair. Why are you shorn of your curls, and what will Honorine say? By the way, where do you board?"

"In the barracks with Major K. I have a pony and four dogs," I hastened to add, as I saw a gathering frown on his patient, worn face.

Dr. Robert's forbearance here burst all bounds. He spoke of the Union soldiers as being sworn enemies, not only of the South, but of the church, as desecraters of her altars. Their vaunted patriotism he called a mere pretense to wound and pillage. Their heroism was the bloodthirstiness of republican cruelty. Seeing me still unmoved by all this passionate declaration, he adopted another method and asked:

"You are a son of the South, are you not, Harry?"

"I don't know where I belong. Papa said I belonged as much to the North as the South.

Mamma did, too, for we both belonged to papa. We are all going back home to live. Grandma and you and me and Honorine and Celeste," I cried, elated at the thought.

"Heaven grant your wish, dear child," he answered with a sigh.

"Major K. says, we shall have our home again, and the plantation, too," I assured him, confident that the promise would be fulfilled.

"Don't depend upon promises, Harry. Talk is exceedingly cheap."

Dr. Robert had well nigh lost faith in everything. A noise at the window attracted our attention.

"Good-bye, Harold," Dr. Robert whispered, pushing me through the little doorway into the chapel.

"Hello, bub!" shouted the figure at the window.

"Lord! it's Johnnie! Come out and let's renew our acquaintance, as it were."

I had reached the window and as my old friend, the solemn looking sentinel, descended from his perch, I scrambled down among the ivy vines to the ground.

"This your creeter?"

"My what?"

"This your pony?" He patted Dixie's neck. "What's your name, bub?" he asked, grinning.

"Harold," I replied, "and what's yours, if you please," I added.

"Well, bub, my name's pecooliar. Don't know's you'll ricollect it, but I hain't no kyard nor pencil. We'll have to trust to your memory. My name's strange, Lord! it's pecooliar. It's Smith. My name's Smith, but Lord! it ain't John Smith," he smiled triumphantly down upon me.

"No—what's your name?"

"Harry," I answered.

"Lord! be you any kin to the Long-John-Harry?"

"I don't know, indeed. I never met him. Who is he?"

"Don't you know Long-John-Harry? Bub, did you ever see the General?"

"I've seen Confederate General Lovell and—"

"Lord!" he interrupted, "I don't talk about Confeds. Did you ever see the general commanding here? Well, he's a close connection of the Long-John-Harry. I calcalate it's some cooler for the general now, but ain't goin' t' say how it's goin' t' be after he's through here."

I was thoroughly mystified, and stood wondering what Mr. Smith meant, so I asked:

"What will the general do when he's through here?"

“Lord! bub, how do I know? Do like Ellixander Hamilton, I guess.”

“How’s that?”

“Don’t you know Ellixander Hamilton wept because there wasn’t any more worlds to confiscate?”

I had never heard the fact before, but was not startled by it.

“You’re young, bub, and have got everything to learn yet. Can you read and write and cypher?”

I nodded.

“You know ’rethmetic—been in long division?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied, wondering and fearing what would come next.

“Long division’s a putty good rule, but Lord! it don’t work with a soldier. We high privates don’t practice any such rules. It’s all short division with our finances. Bub, do you know much history? All about Napoleon crossing the Deleware—all that’s very instructive to the youthful interlec’. You know all about Samson bein’ the strongest man and Moses in the bullrushes? I be bound you’ve been interdooced to all them Bible fellers. Now tell me the name of the boy that stood on the burnin’ deck of the gunboat?”

A sly twinkle illuminated his dull eyes for a second. It aroused my anger, but I swallowed my wrath and was silent.

“Now, bub,” he said in a conciliatory tone, “don’t get your dander up, I was jokin’. I’m a great fellow for a joke and keep the camp alive and goin’ with my cheerfulness. Our boys jes dote on me—you see I’m so witty and cheerful. Going?” he called as I walked toward my pony. “Hold on, I’ll give you a boust; there we are,” as he lifted me into the saddle.

“That’s a middlin’ good nag. Good-bye, bub. Don’t forget Smith, Sammie—or what’s your name. Yes, good-bye, Harry, and good luck to you. Remember Smith—Danyuel Smith—in your prayers. Looky here, Harry! what’s you doin’ dressed up in Union blue? You’re a Johnny. Are you tryin’ to be on both sides of the fence to once? Slide over on the safe side, bub, and stick to that friend like grim death to a dead Confed. Good-bye, and don’t forget yours truly, Danyuel Smith.”

I cantered down the street with his hearty laugh ringing in my ears. Of a truth, Danyuel Smith was cheerful.

“Howdy, Uncle Ike!” I shouted as I caught a glimpse of the old fellow in the distance. He turned, shaded his eyes with his hand and looked at me, then hastened toward me.

“Bless my soul! Son, is datchew? Howdy, mon! Got on britches! Son’s got on sho’ nuf

britches! Mon, whar's you bin an' whar's you gwine? Um-um-um," walking off a pace and viewing me with his head turned half around. "My Lawd! son's got some britches! Ole miss, fa'ly tuck er duck fit, son. How big is de mon now? How long's dis boy-man?" He grasped my foot from the stirrup and held my leg straight out. "Lawd sabe my rotten ole time! Son's er grown ossifer now."

"Where is Mr. Lascelle, Unk Ike?"

"Plantashin, honey, takin' keer dat cottin. Sh-sh-sh. Dontcher cheapit, sonny, for dat cott'n all you got t' stan' twix you an' starva-shin. Does you see ole 'Pollus an' Unk Lewis much times, mon?"

"Do you have a good time, Unk Ike?" I asked.

"Huh, I works here and den I works dar. Lawd! Lawd! dese folks mighty curis. Dey say es how dey freed us an' now we gotty work. I nebber ax nobody t' free me—free's I want to be. Lawd, honey, I'se had er skanlis hard time sence I bin free. Don't take no mo' de freedom in mine. Ben er workin' f' a lot er ha'f-hammered white trash. Wooesh you could see dem folks—dee looks plum lak er passel er ash cats, an' de chillen! Lawd! dose chillen look lak dee bin suckin' de bluin' raag dese ten year. Sonny, aintcher heeard 'bout Mr. Lascelle? Well, son, de hawjakers done pull de

po' critter up by his naik twict, but doe he ain't kilt yit. You see Mr. Lascelle won't tellum whar's dat cott'n. Pollus done gone up de ribber t' see what kin he do. Dontcher say nuf'n 'bout dat cott'n, honey, case some dem Yainkees mout git hit. Um-um-um. Son's sho got britches!

"Honey," he said, stroking my knee; "son, dat cott'n's all ole mistis an' you an' Misson Rene an' Missle Es gotty lib on, sides de lan', an' de quality ain't no dirt-eaters, you know. Who dat wid you, son?"

Old Ike glanced suspiciously at the orderly. When his fears had been quieted, he continued:

"I heeard es how dat ole cockeye Ginerall was'nt gwine to be here much longer. Sonny, I'se gotty go now. Is dee good t' you, honey? Don't let 'em spile you an' don't git uppity, an' bigitty an' too brash. Um-um-um, son's got britches, an' what's mo' got ha'r lak a plum mon. Huh!" With these parting remarks I rode on to the barracks.

I was in a fair way of being spoiled, for the "Little Confed," as they called me, was the pet and plaything of the barracks. To these soldiers the campaign seemed a pleasant excursion. They made a jest of everything—from the wan faces of the sick to the drooping eyelid of the General commanding the Department of the Gulf.

A man who carries a musket in the ranks is but a small ingredient of the mass that formed the army, and his thoughts, hopes and ambitions were probably as unknown and uncared for as the precise spot of earth that yielded the ore from which his musket was smelted.

The Union, in its effort in crushing the rebellion, had elevated the individual, and each soldier, in whatever station he occupied, felt himself qualified to entertain opinions and express sentiments which, because they were his own, he felt to be just and loyal, and all talked of war with the gusto of perfect generalship. The great operations of the campaign and the various qualifications of different commanders were daily subjects of dispute in the barracks. Upon two topics only were all agreed, and there unanimity overbalanced all discord. They agreed that the Union was the most glorious nation on earth, and deemed themselves the heaven-born disseminators of freedom throughout the length and breadth of the best government the world ever saw. They were sworn enemies of the haughty Southern aristocrat, and the missionaries of a political creed, which was not only to elevate mankind, but to render every condition in life eminently happy and prosperous. They also agreed that the General commanding the Department of

the Gulf was a huge mistake—a libel upon nature.

When I reached the barracks that afternoon, I noticed Uncle Louis was busily stirring a conglomerated mass in a large camp kettle. Walking over to his fire I watched the proceedings closely. Now and then a few grains of corn appeared on the surface as he sang and stirred.

“Higher clam de cherry tree,
Riper grow de cheree.”

“What’s that, Uncle Louis?” I asked pointing at the kettle.

“Homily, son. Dontcher git too close, honey, Spile your britches.”

“I’m so glad!” I exclaimed.

“So’s I, sonny. I tells you, honey, Unk Louis are nat’rally wore out on brade. Hit’s brade t’day an’ brade all de time. Ash cake’s what I’m er hankerin’ after, an’ bress Gawd I got hit, mon.”

“Where?”

“Jes nachelly bake hit, mon, an’ what’s mo’ I’s jes perlately bilin’ my and yourn homily.”

“I like hominy and buttermilk. They taste like the plantation, don’t they?” I asked, squatting a little distance from the fire. The old negro half closed his eyes, while a smile of satisfaction lighted the wrinkled old face.

“Hush up talkin’, son! jes shet right up er splavacating’ bout de flush pots er Egup! Mon! ef you wants Unk Lewis to chaw glory—I say son, ef you wants to see Unk Lewis chaw glory an’ spit up de hallyluyers jes sit dis nigger gen’lemon down t’ ash cake ’n buttermilk! Son, hit’s de milk an’ honey t’ some folks. Ah! ah! er er um um!”

“Well,” I said, smacking my lips in sympathetic anticipation, “where is the ash cake?”

“Dontcher fret an stew, honey; Unk Lewis sho done cook hit. See dat, mon?”

Stooping he swept aside the smoldering embers and with a practiced hand burrowed into the deeper drift of ashes with a prolonged um-um-um brought to light a thin, round cake covered with ashes.

“Hit’s done, sonny—hit’s plum done!” the old man announced as he brushed away the ashes with a dish rag. “Come on, mon.”

“What about the hominy?” I asked, casting covetous glances at the boiling corn.

“Jes you wait, sonny-boy. Gotty worsh dem ashes out’n dat cawn an’ soak hit an’ bile hit good ’fo’ hits name homily. Son, twixt me’n you an’ de gate pos’ taint no Yainky in dis constermint what know how t’ cook. Nosir, dee don’t knew nuf’n ’bout de cook pot. Huh, hit’s er leetle brade an’ less butter an’

mo' tea. Lawd sabe my rotten soul! I hain't seed er pot er greens sence here I bin; sich livin'! Ole mistis wouldn't nigh stan' dat; dunno what ole mistis gwine do caze she jes nachelly ain't gwine t' eat white folkeses' cookin'; ole mistis mightly 'tickler an' so's Misson Rene and Missle Es. Dem gals gwine be pow'ful hawngrey when dee gits home—dee always is hawngry f' some Mar Ann's cookin'. Ole mistis 'lows how Misson Rene's de sollum midnight an' Missle Es de sunlight."

Lifting me to a chair before a little square table the old negro bent above me asking in the old obsequious way, "Hab some de ros' tucky? hits nice an' palpabul. Some de jelly," placing a tin cup of buttermilk before me.

"Eyesters!" he announced with a bow and flourish of the dish rag, placing before me a piece of ash-cake on a tin pan.

"Wine?" he affectionately asked as he poured black coffee from a blacker pot into a pitcher with a broken handle.

"Mawster need er tonic," he said softly, placing a cup of water in front of my pan. "Ment julip," he explained.

I understood it all; we often "played like" we were at home.

"Ole mistis done scuze herse'f. Dar go Misson Rene 'dout de scuse. Missle Es don't scuse, she jes laf. Ole Mistis er talkin' t' Dr.

Rob't now. Misson Rene feedin' de birds an' Missle Es er pickin' on de gittar. Ole mistis 'low es how Misson Rene de sollum midnight an' erer Missle Es de sunlight."

His voice sank into a whisper. He had finished his supper of ash-cake and buttermilk, and was dreaming of the old halcyon days when "old mistis" reigned in the hearts of her sable subjects, honored above all women—when "Misson Rene" and "Missle Es" toddled about the house, happily oblivious of their orphaned condition, the special joy and care of mammy and Dad Louis.

Dream on, old man; the wearing of "sorrow's crown of sorrow" brings many a heart-ache. Let the old memories linger, for after all it is better to remember the sunny paths along life's journey, darkened though they be by clouds and heartbreaks.

CHAPTER VIII.

In spite of the kindness shown me in the barracks, I was growing weary of camp life and often sobbed myself to sleep, thinking of my poor, dead mother and longing to see my grandmother, Dr. Robert, sweet, blue-eyed Celeste and the stately Honorine. I often reminded the Major of his promise, that before another summer was over we should be re-established in our own home. The Major was

frank with me. There is, probably, no feature of character so seductive as candor—real or apparent. The most artful of all flatteries is that which presents itself in the garb of frankness and seems to select, as if by intuition, the object most suited for a confidant. The Major carried my childish heart by a *coup de main* of this kind, and not for my own life would I have betrayed his most trifling confidence. I believed in the Major, and, though worldly experience has since shown his small deceptions towards me, I have only smiled at the recollection.

Major Kinsdall was correct. Before another summer had waned, I was safe and happy in my own beautiful home.

Vicksburg had fallen and I was glad of it for my grandmother had come; the Convent had yielded up our treasures, Celeste and Hon-orine and we were all, thank Heaven? at home again.

The heartless Attila, whose rule from the St. Charles Hotel had swept like a desolating storm over homes of innocence and Edens of peace, had been deposed.

A gentleman had taken command of the Department of the Gulf, and no lawless rule or heartless rapacity marked his reign.

Dr. Robert, no longer in disguise or terror, was, with Mr. Lascelle, striving to bring "order out of chaos," at the plantation. I still

saw a good deal of the Major, for he was a welcome and a frequent visitor at our home.

At home! With grandmother, sweet, blue-eyed Celeste and the stately Honorine! Home! How suggestive is the mere word of love and comfort! Our beautiful home was our own again, it seemed too good to be true.

I have said the Major was a frequent and a welcome visitor at our house. I drew that very mildly, for he was there so much that Uncle Louis spoke of him in the kitchen as "Mr. Peter Constant." Major Kinsdall was in love with Misson Rene too, he said.

They did not seem to get along as lovingly as Captain Charlie and Celeste; but everybody is different, and Honorine was very different from Celeste. Honorine could look daggers and Celeste's blue eyes gave you smiles.

To-day Honorine and the Major were not doing so well. "If you will consider the matter, Miss Fontaine," he was saying, "I am quite sure you will come to a far different conclusion."

"I prefer to hear no more on that subject," Honorine answered icily.

I lay very quietly on the sofa, my head on her lap, her hand alternately smoothing and tumbling my hair.

"You cannot mean what you say, Miss Fontaine, surely you cannot. Many a woman

has sacrificed her happiness to her pride. Have a care, for your own sake if not for mine, how you add to the number," he said warningly.

Honorine was silent. Her hand trembled as it moved back and forth over my forehead. Had there been any vacillation in her mind this adjuration would have but confirmed a fixedness of purpose.

She readily caught the daintily fashioned reproach in his tones more keenly than was spoken—a reproach upon her impulsive character; which unspoken disapproval had so often wounded her and which in truth had more to do with her present state of feelings than the difference in birth, education and politics.

Major Kinsdall was an awkward love-maker, though he was an honorable man, and his untimely persistence had given fire to the eyes whose expression might have grown softer, had lent steadiness to the voice that under other circumstances might have trembled. Besides, this was one of Honorine's "bad days."

"Suppose," suggested Major Kinsdall, "we wait and think over it."

"No need of that," she replied, with a queer little smile. "My mind is quite made up. I shall not sacrifice my happiness or yours."

"Thank you!" the Major said gratefully.

"You mistake my meaning, Major Kinsdall. I shall not sacrifice my own happiness

or yours. We should be miserable together—we are so totally different. You are cold and unreasonable, I am hot-headed and impulsive, as you have too often told me. Your faults lie so deep they are never near enough the surface for you to see them. They make you hard and unforgiving toward me, for whom you profess so much affection.”

“I have often noticed Miss Fontaine—”

“That is the great trouble; you notice too much. I never could live with a private detective like you—on the lookout, on the watch all the time for some fault to reprove.”

“My dear Miss Fontaine!”

“I have always been as free as air,” Honorine continued, “and I would soon learn to despise a husband in the character of censor or judge.”

“But, Miss Fontaine, if you—”

“Life would be one long, fierce quarrel,” Honorine went on as if driven. “No, Major Kinsdall, it is because I would save each from a life of wretchedness that I insist upon an end to our engagement.”

It was impossible to doubt her earnestness. Honorine meant what she said truly. She still stroked my hair, sitting erect and resolute.

Major Kinsdall walked up and down the room. At length he stopped in front of our sofa. I opened my eyes a little to see how he looked.

Hard and cold as Honorine had called him he was now more moved than she.

"Miss Fontaine," he called, in an unsteady voice. "The caprice of a moment cannot make such ruin as this. Your grandmother's wishes—more than all, you force me to remind you—your own confessions and promises, must have some weight. Have you never loved me—or, have you only been playing a part?"

"If your words were anything to me now," she scornfully exclaimed, "I should resent what you have said. Have I ever loved you? It seems so when I have for weeks been pupil, culprit and very nearly your slave."

"Miss Fontaine!"

"I have positively learned to dread your presence. Even in innocent gayety you find some fault."

"Not so bad as that," he remonstrated gently.

Honorine had certainly made up her mind to have it out with Major Kinsdall. She began again:

"Different constructions have been put upon all I did and said. You have drilled me in every intricacy of speech, every petty detail of conduct, as if I had been a lunatic and you my watchful attendant and instructor."

"Dear, dear; how you talk!" the Major said, half bewildered.

"No one can discipline me. You would degrade any woman you married. I have borne a great deal more than grandma dreams of. I will not marry into bondage."

"But for all that, Honorine, I love you. You are not yourself to-day." Major Kinsdall's voice was so changed I gazed at him in openeyed wonder.

"I sincerely wish you did ; but the hope is a forlorn one. You do not love me. You love Ernest Kinsdall, not Honorine Fontaine, and you will be good enough to remember that to you I am Miss Fontaine."

"Look here, Honorine !" I exclaimed, jumping up in defense of the Major, you are a little bit too particular. There's Captain Charlie—he never called Celeste 'Miss Fontaine' in his life. He says 'My Celeste'—just as sweet and easy, and holds her hand all the time he is talking. I like *his* way ! Captain Charlie kisses Celeste, too !" I declared.

"Son !"

"It's so ! I've seen Captain Charlie kiss Celeste, and she kissed back, too ! dozens and dozens of times. Major Kinsdall is as good as Captain Charlie. Why can't you be like Celeste and kiss back ?"

"Run away, son," Honorine said, her face like a thundercloud and her eyes looking daggers in spite of her gentle tones.

"Sit right here beside her, Major!" I shouted, much excited. "Sit here and take her hand and say 'my Honorine' soft and easy like Capt. Charlie says 'my Celeste' and see if she don't melt. We all have to pet Honorine. It takes lots of soft talk to keep her in tune, you see she has had so much trouble, grandma says."

I glanced at Honorine, tears were silently stealing over her pale face. My heart smote me.

"We love her all the same," I hastened to say as I wiped away her tears and kissed her.

"I said we loved you all the same, Honorine," I cried regretfully and almost in tears.

"Why don't you say something, Honorine? I said we loved you."

"Thank you, son," she said, choking back her sobs.

"I will go now. Say, don't you love me a bit, Honorine?"

"I love you very dearly, son," she said, kissing me.

"Don't you love the Major too, Honorine?" determined to see my favorite fairly dealt with.

"Very much, son, run along," she whispered, while that gentleman examined an ornament on the mantel piece. I walked leisurely out of the room, determined to report to grandma and have affairs amicably adjusted.

"Miss Fontaine," Major Kinsdall said, walking slowly towards her. "It is very strange that we have so deceived ourselves, that a bitter dislike has crept into the place love once held. What a blind dreamer I have been!"

"You are not alone in idle regret. I too, have dreamed; but it is all over. Major Kinsdall, allow me to bid you good bye."

Honorine arose, held out her hand, her attitude as firm and stately as ever; but her averted eyes shone with suppressed emotion and her pale face was wet with tears.

He had intended saying good-bye without another word, but a glance into her troubled face, proud and defiant though it was, moved him to unwonted tenderness; for with all his exacting disposition and dictatorial manner Major Kinsdall loved Honorine with his soul's strength.

"Miss Fontaine!" he began, but a little gesture from her arrested his words.

He saw it would be vain, that she would, in her present mood, reject his most earnest prayer—as she had scorned his expostulations.

"Good-bye, dear," he said gently. "Bad as you deem me, my Honorine, I wish you all happiness—apart from my own."

How still and proud she stood! He noticed every expression of her pitiful face; he

read plainly the agony against which her indomitable will upheld her.

"Honorine, it breaks my heart to leave you thus. Can we not compromise?"

"Do I not suffer as well? As usual you do not understand me. We are so different—you are unyielding; so am I. You are exacting; I am impatient of the slightest control and—"

"Let us not part in anger, Honorine. If you were not so high-strung."

"If I were not Honorine Fontaine," she said, her sobs coming between each word.

"Can she ever have loved me?" was the bitter question he asked himself as he hurried from her presence.

"Grandma!" I called as I ran down the hall, "Honorine and Major have had the biggest row, and—"

"Come here, son. You should not speak of poor Honorine having 'a row' with any one. She and Major Kinsdall have possibly disagreed—differed, rather—upon some trivial matter, but never say she had 'a row' with anyone again. Run away, now, son." Grandma kissed me and patted my hand. Failing to make a proper impression upon Grandma, I went into the kitchen where Aunt Mary dozed peacefully in her chair.

"Aunt Mary!" I shouted in her ear.

“Lawd a’mighty, son! Whatcher wants?”
She sat up straight now.

“Honorine and Major are having the awful-
est fuss!”

“Misson Rene jes a projickin’—taint no
harm in Misson Rene, son,” Aunt Mary said,
smiling. “What de matter widdem? Jes a
fussin’ ’bout nuffin ’tall; jes sorter quarl t’
hear deyse’f talk; dat’s all.”

I was not re-assured; but feared it was all
up with my friend the Major.

“Lawd, son,” Aunt Mary went on, “Gals
is mighty curis sort o’ fewmales, dey is dat.
Don’t be pestered, honey, ’cause Misson Rene
gwine t’ tote her own skillet, an’ don’t you fer-
git dat p’int of de argyment. Taint nobody
gwine ’pose on Misson Rene. Dem black eyes
talks, son; jes nachelly talks; and talks de
gawspil, too! Don’t you be pestered ’bout dat
man, neither, son. He got de big I ’long wid
him, jest like all de mans. Its de BIG I an’ *lit-
tle you.*”

Major Kinsdall walked rapidly down the
street, trying to analyze his feelings.

CHAPTER IX.

He might never find another to take her
place in his affections; but she, in her won-
drous beauty, who loved society and was wor-
shiped by its devotees, could and would no

doubt find his place filled by a more fortunate suitor—such things as hearts caught in the rebound were not impossible; and he thought with a pang of Honorine, *his* Honorine and the man who was to be blessed by his loss. Here the BIG I stood up and whispered.

“Is it a loss?”

Was not his present unhappiness a shorter, kinder pang than a life-long misery with this high-spirited, hot-headed daughter of the South?

Ah, Major Kinsdall! turn the subject over and over in your own mind as you will; look at it from every standpoint and, like all your sex, find always a great, colossal I standing out in bold relief, veiling the shadow of justice, hiding the semblance of truth.

“I am right—she wrong,” he mentally decided, looking at the matter through the BIG I.

Major Kinsdall wanted to be just, tried to be more than just, but the BIG I stood up and out so broad and tall it almost hid his sense of right.

He took another look at his misery; this time from the other side of the monumental BIG I.

“Honorine! poor, dear little girl!” his heart plead. “Was she not right? Was it not beautiful in her to confess the truth though it cost her tears and heart aches?”

The BIG I here veered 'round and stood exactly in front of his mental vision.

No, no, her words and actions were inexcusable. What right had a woman to a towering passion? He saw her scorn all so mean and little. Her truthfulness that should have shone out radiantly glimmered, but weakly through that opaque BIG I.

The glorious afternoon sunshine flooded the park and cast unbroken shadows on the grass.

Major Kinsdall saw so many happy people that afternoon and vaguely wondered at their gayety as he strolled listlessly about.

At last he met a brother officer who was David to his Jonathan, Damon to his Pythias.

This Damon was not as handsome a man as was Major Kinsdall, he was below the average height with a rugged, irregular face, but his brown eyes and black hair gave a kind of rough beauty to his face; for the brown eyes told of honesty, energy and penetration. No one ever thought of his homeliness, for, as Celeste expressed it, "his were eyes that laughed and talked."

Grandma said he was brilliant and engaging, he talked well, told stories and anecdotes with spirit—he was brave, and determined, a man whose energy and self-command were unconquerable. Grandma said.

Damon saw something was amiss with his friend and very soon had an account of Major Kinsdall's troubles.

"Honorine is so changed," he complained.

"Think of what sorrows she has had to bear and remember that she is a Southern flower unused even to rough wind. I think it kind of her to give you a word or look," Damon said seriously.

"You do not understand," Major Kinsdall said, impatiently.

"I understand this much—that you have not been kind to your beautiful Honorine."

"I think I have," Major Kinsdall asserted with spirit.

"Has he been good, Harry?" Damon asked me, smilingly.

"I expect so, for to-day even when they were talking and Honorine crying, she said—"

"You talk too much, son," Major Kinsdall interrupted.

"What is it? What did she say, Harold?" Damon asked.

"I said, 'Don't you love the Major, Honorine?' and she whispered—"

"What?" the Major asked, suddenly interested.

"I said, 'Don't you love the Major, Honorine?' and she kissed me and whispered, 'Very much, son; run away, now,'" I repeated.

The two gentlemen exchanged glances, then Damon said:

“Think, Ernest, of what she has suffered! Think of the bitterness they of the South all live under.”

“I can’t help that.”

“Of course not; but you should have some consideration and magnanimity. Your occupation of love-making has unhappily verged into fault-finding, I suspect,” Damon declared.

“Exactly what she said in a blaze of anger, too. She even called me unreasonable and exacting.”

“So you are. I have not a doubt of it. People often reveal strange truths under excitement, and are sometimes unjust, too.”

“How you talk!”

“Ernest, as a man you should be the superior in moral courage and power. Do you not think you could have been more considerate, less sensitive and consequently happier?”

“I am sure I have been to Honorine all a lover could be. Why, I could die for her and count my life well lost!” the Major declared.

“Yes,” Damon smiled, “but it would not amount to a hill of beans if you sacrificed nine lives at your lady love’s shrine. You should be too chivalrous, too merciful to cause a woman sorrow. I really think there is more nobility in the suppression of self—in the ig-

noring of doubt and the misery that doubt brings than in all the fights of St. George and the Dragon.

"Nonsense!"

"We are all prone to demand more than we are willing to give," Damon went on, unheeding his friend's exclamation.

"The genuine hero is he who demands nothing."

"Am I a dog to lie in the dust at a woman's feet?" Major Kinsdall asked, half angrily.

"Oh, no, not at all; but in all seriousness, Ernest, you should be stronger, braverhearted. Do you love Miss Fontaine so entirely? Then show it by a persistent patience and uniform tenderness. She is so very different from you? Then look over her peculiarities of disposition—not that Miss Fontaine is ill-tempered; but one can see that she is nervous and irritable—or would be upon provocation."

Major Kinsdall was silent.

"We prate of heroic deeds, Ernest, yet we neglect to cultivate our real heroism, which is all told when we 'bear ye one another's burdens.' We step upon and crush the flowers at our feet and reach far above our heads for the unattainable, ideal blossoms. How often we disdain to show appreciation for blessings

we possess and vaguely dream of perfection in others—not in ourselves.”

Major Kinsdall listened without a word, his great heart was touched, he resolutely put the BIG I behind him and saw only Honorine, the one woman in the world to him, with tear-stained, troubled face.

“I don’t know but you are right. I will see Miss Fontaine to-morrow and make it up with her,” he said, somewhat slowly.

“Another thing, while I am in the mood, Ernest. I will tell you that with your persistency you often annoy your peerless Honorine until I have felt a sympathy for her. I think,” Damon said, rising and looking at his watch, “if you will excuse me, I have just time to make Miss Fontaine a little call. Will you come—will you, son?” He smiled down upon me as I sat upon Major Kinsdall’s knee.

I waited a moment to hear what he said.

“I guess son and I will go driving, won’t we, son?”

A sudden shower caused us all to hasten away.

Damon found Honorine standing near a window in the library, watching the rain that now came in a lazy drizzle upon the tangle of ivy under and around the window. To her it seemed like a pall from the bier of her dead hopes. Her face was as sad as the heavens and her heart was as heavy as her eyes.

She turned with an impatient gesture at the sound of footsteps, for she thought Major Kinsdall had returned.

When she saw it was not he her face flushed with pleasure. She smilingly held out her hand, sighing as if a heavy burden had been lifted.

Then, as if remembering something, she drew herself away, checking both impulse and smile, looked at Damon as coldly and questioningly as if he were the Major himself.

"I am taking quite a liberty, Miss Fontaine," he began.

"Not an unpardonable one, I think," she returned.

"I want a long, quiet talk with you, Miss Fontaine."

"Have a seat here," Honorine drew nearer the fire.

"Has anything ruffled the calm of your platonic soul?"

"Nothing whatever," he laughed pleasantly.

"Miss Fontaine, may I speak to you without fear of offending—as a brother might talk to a sister?"

Honorine smiled. Damon caught its meaning.

"Nothing of that kind, I assure you," he laughed, "that theory met with an untimely

annihilation with Miss Celeste's and my experience. I simply want a friendly talk with you."

"About Celeste?"

"May I talk?"

"Certainly you may," Honorine said assuringly.

"Then I shall speak to you of my brother-friend, Ernest Kinsdall!"

"Oh!" ejaculated the stately Honorine.

"What of him?" she asked with studied composure.

"Do not be offended, Miss Fontaine. I will say nothing that will hurt you; but must be frank. Do you think you are wise—I do not say right, in your treatment of Ernest?"

Honorine looked at him in wonder.

"Remember, Miss Fontaine, I did not say 'are you right,' but ask if you are wise. I realize that this is a most delicate subject and one with which I have no earthly right to tamper. You are young, you are imperious, you are beautiful. Let us put aside all ceremony. Think of me as an ancient priest come to confess you, and let no thought of my officiousness mar my usefulness to you. Shall I go on, Miss Fontaine?"

"Go on."

"Are you not a little—just a trifle hard on Ernest? His awkward persistency is very try-

ing, I grant ; but he loves you so entirely, Miss Fontaine."

Honorine sat silently watching the fire.

"Miss Fontaine, I think if you and Ernest would —"

"No, no. Did Major Kinsdall give you this mission?"

"He certainly spoke to me of your coldness toward him. He is very much disturbed ; he sees just where he has been naughty and craves forgiveness."

"Did Major Kinsdall ask you to say this to me?" Honorine slowly asked.

"Oh, no, not exactly ; but, Miss Fontaine, will you not yield a gracious permission for him to see you—just once?"

"I think," Honorine said, raising her eyes, "I think when Major Kinsdall wishes that permission he will ask for it. I have not forbidden him the house, I am sure."

"Your work?" Damon asked as he examined a picture on the mantel.

"Celeste's, my little sister did it."

"She executes well. I am something of an artist myself, but have no time for the cultivation of my favorite study. Do you paint, Miss Fontaine?"

"Oh, yes, I did those portraits over there."

"A most beautiful face! May I ask whom?"

"My mother's sister—son's mother."

"And this?"

"My own mother. See Celeste's resemblance?"

"Indeed I do."

"Honorine!" Major Kinsdall cried, coming into the room.

"I beg your pardon, I love you Honorine, and this estrangement distracts me. Come, let's make up."

"To have you scold me to-morrow?" she asked calmly.

"Never again. I promise to be pleased with all you do and say now and forever," he declared rashly.

"Let's find Grandmama, son," suggested Damon, taking me by my hand which was grasping Honorine's dress.

"Have you two made up?" I asked, still unsatisfied.

"Oh yes!" the Major said laughing.

"Honorine, are you going to marry the Major, or are you going to fall out again?" I was determined to settle the question.

"Run away, son."

"*Are you going to marry the Major?*" I fairly screamed.

"I expect I shall, son," Honorine said sweetly.

The trumpet lilies bloomed outside the windows—the oleanders lifted their pink and white heads to nod a welcome to the bursting buds of a rose vine.

The violet bordered beds were all aglow with beauty and fragrance; the foliage plants, glistening in showy colors and luxuriant growth—all this and much more delighted and made glad my heart as I gazed in thankfulness upon my surroundings.

“Well, children,” grandma said, “we don’t find things exactly as we left them; but let us be grateful that we have at least the house left.”

“It’s exactly as if we were just beginning to keep house,” Honorine remarked.

“I am sure we have the flowers left,” laughed Celeste as she arranged the vases. Celeste was feeling almost delirious to-day. Capt. Tremaine would be home to-morrow.

“Where did you find those vases, honey?” grandma asked, putting on her glasses for a closer inspection.

“Aunt Mary gave them to me this morning—they are son’s.”

“Hided mor’n dat in my fedder baid,” giggled the blackest of darkies.

“Where are the spoons?” grandma asked.

“Yes, the spoons!” laughed Celeste.

“The spoons!” echoed Honorine.

"Deys all digged up."

"From what place?"

"Daddy done digged up a box f'om unner de 'nanner tree."

"Where is the box?"

"Oucher, ole mistis! oucher on de back pizzaroo!" Uncle Louis called from the hall door.

"Hit 'pear lak son dunno whots de matter wid dat bernanna tree cos hit die," he laughed. "Son dunno all mistesses silber war layin' right dar also. G'long t' dat kitchen Mar'ann, you know mistes ain't gwine t'eat no white folkses cookin'. Whotcher studdin 'bout, nigger? Mar'ann feel mighty big a hirin' t' ole mistes," he laughed as he unpacked the silver.

"Mar'ann's a free nigger. I 'longs to son, myse'f, I does."

Our slaves were free; and through the instrumentality of our friend Major Kinsdall, our landed possessions were still our own. The slave holder of the South died hard, but no moan escaped him. His hand to hand struggle for Right made him stoical—mayhap desperate.

The South was never subdued.

It was awakened out of luxury and introduced to energy. Latent powers were brought into play and for years it has toiled and hoped and prayed to re-established its former financial and political footing.

Hope deferred made the heart sick—almost wore the heart out; but after all the glad fruition comes.

After all these weary years of waiting the South is herself again. The day of her political salvation is at hand. Her jubilee has come. Her voice is heard and heeded.

Southern talent moves of its own volition. The Southern heart bears the badge of its own nobility. Southern principles are as staunch and true now as when in the gory days of the sixties, the Cross of St. Andrew, bathed in Southern blood floated triumphantly over an hundred battlefields.

We have crossed the Al-Sirat and all is well with us. We are all right at our house. The Major and Honorine have at last made up, and with Celeste and Captain Tremaine, who came back loyal and true, peace and love reign supreme.

Come down among us, O, ye of the Northland, and see for yourselves how hospitably wide open are Southern hearts and homes.

The great burden has been lifted, and its bitter memories are all gone with the generation that engendered them.

They live, when they live at all, among those who have climbed the mountain top, and are fast going down into the shadowy land beyond.

They recall the doomsday of the Confederacy at Appomattox with the same regretful tenderness a mother remembers her dead child.

The strong young Southern hearts now climbing the hill, find naught but sunshine, and the monuments that mark the way commemorate the virtues of the noble and the brave.

Shall oblivion claim all else ?



"TOO LATE FOR NERVY."

[A LEAF FROM VALLOMBROSA.]

"There's three buggies and a cyart! I wonder what's the matter here? Nervy has got lots of comp'ny," Mrs. Beard remarked as she pulled up in front of Mr. Blanks'. The white sandy road glittered with heat, as it stretched away north and south into dim forests of oaks.

Resting upon a rail fence were the shafts of three buggies and a rickety cart, and below in the shade of a tree was a wagon. "Mis' Lary said yistiddy Mis' Blanks was mighty sick—maybe she's dead," ventured the other occupant of the cart. "We better go in," Mrs. Beard decided, urged by neighborly interest and curiosity.

She drove a little nearer and pushing her brown sunbonnet back from her face, scanned the house.

On the front porch stood a square pine table which held the usual water bucket, a tin basin set beside it and above hung a long towel. From the wall on the left hung several saddles, bridles, halters and bits of rope.

Dogs, from a tiny terrier to a great unhappy looking cur that tugged at a block and chain, lay about the house and yard; the hounds stood half erect against the fence barking at the new comers.

"Whoa, Moll!" Mrs. Beard addressed the tall, rawboned mule she drove.

"Take the rope, hun, and le's tie her good, Moll's terrible t' slip the bridle."

The old lady handed her pink cheeked granddaughter a questionable looking plow-line.

"Now, hun, come on, them dawgs aint goin' t' pester us."

She took the child's hand in hers and walked as swiftly as her rheumatic feet would allow up the sandy walk into the house. On the threshold a woman met her—a woman whose very appearance was eloquent of better days.

"How's all?" Mrs. Beard breathed, awed by a nameless dread.

"Mrs. Blanks died yesterday."

"In fact? Po' Minervy! How's Sam a takin of it?"

"He has not been at home for several days."

"A hawg huntin'?"

"I suppose so," was the quiet reply.

"Sam will die an' go t' hawgs yit."

Over in a corner near a window sat a group of neighbors talking in subdued tones.

"Its plum new," one said, glancing at the shining sewing machine against the wall.

"Haint never sewed a stitch on it yit, Nervy haint," Sister Mackey sighed.

"The stove's new, too, haint never bin sot up," Sister Evans said with a sniff of disgust.

"Hit's cur'is how they didn't come in time to he'p po' Nervy out," Sister Bangs ventured.

"Thar comes Sam now. Reckon he knows?"

"Git Mis' Vowel t' tell him."

A stout, middle aged man in his shirt sleeves dismounted from a mule at the gate and came hurriedly into the yard.

After a whispered consultation, the woman of better days advanced to meet him.

"Hello, Mis' Vowel!" he shouted good-naturedly; "what's up? Camp meetin' or log rollin'?"

"Neither, Mr. Blanks; your wife —"

"What's the matter with Nervy? Had a conniption fit?"

"She is dead."

"Dead! Who? Nervy?" He asked, bewilderedly.

"She died yesterday."

"An' me in the woods after them blamed hawgs! Nervy dead! I'll be hanged if I b'leeve it!"

"Come and see." She led the way into a back room where in awful calmness lay the dead wife.

The world said Sam Blanks was a hard case; a man without feeling or principle; hard working himself, he extorted hard, constant work from every one about him, and the delicate, sensitive wife might have fared better with a different husband.

Sam Blanks was not intentionally a cruel man, but he was so absorbed in the thought of money-getting that that one idea swallowed up every other.

He stood gazing in a stunned way at the poor pinched face and folded hands so unused to idleness, and the straight, frail figure upon the lounge impressed him as nothing else had ever done.

Mrs. Vowel turned towards the door.

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned, "Mis Vowel, was I good t' Nervy? You've been in the house three year and you know; was I good to Nervy?"

"I am no man's judge. God forbid that I should judge any one!"

"What's a feller to do? By George! Didn't I buy that new sewin' machine—give Stinson a clean forty dollars for it an' set an' nussed it all the way from Camden—jest sot right by that machine t' keep the wagin from joltin' it to

pieces? You nor no other man can say I didn't. An' that new cookin' stove, I give a big thirty-five dollars for. Bross can tell you so. An' here's Nervy dead! Never got to sew a danged stitch nor cook a blamed dinner on them neither! I tell you, Mis' Vowel, its doggoned mean—its a darn shame!" he blubbered.

Something like a smile flitted over Mrs. Vowel's patrician features.

Sam Blank's face was smeared with streaks of black from his dirty hands, and his bald head made a grotesque picture with its patches and daubs of dirt.

Mrs. Vowel reverently covered the dead face and left the room.

Outside the sun shone and the birds sang. The south wind breathed a melody through the oaks, and behind and beyond lay the broad expanse of blooming cotton fields.

Sam Blanks was the best farmer in Canaan [not the historical Canaan of Galilee, but Canaan in Ouachita county, Arkansas; whose actualities were more picturesque than its history and a retrospection fills the mind of a native with memories of the loveliest of Arcadias], his fences were always well built, his fields well cultivated and his cattle and mules well kept.

To be sure his neighbors did sometimes accuse him of appropriating more wild hogs

from the swamps than his "claim" allowed and more than once report was rife of his having burned a neighbor's ginhouse and of his having "laid down" the fence of a neighbor's cornfield that his stock might enter and destroy.

His mule had been "tracked" many a time when he had never suspected.

Though he was held in such contempt, his gentle, patient wife was much loved and respected. She had "married below her and lived to repent," people said.

"Sam's a cryin'," Mrs. Beard whispered to Mrs. Mackey as the sobbing reached them.

"Sam orter cry, Sister Beard," Mrs. Mackey said, stolidly.

"He orter cry blood."

"You know, Sister Mackey, the good book says 'jedge not,'" Mrs. Beard said, settling her glasses. "Lemme tell you, Sister Beard, Sam never let Nervy have *nothin'* she took pleasure in; he even flung away her flowers—boxes an' all. He 'lowed 'twern't no use of flowers, nobody could eat sich trash, an' told Nervy t' plant 'taters; they was 'most as purty as cawn,' he 'lowed. Yes, Sister Beard, Sam orter weep blood. I said it an' I say it agin', an' say it 'til my tongue draps." "Lawsa me!" Sister Evans exclaimed in mild astonishment.

"That ain't a patchin', Sister Ivins. Sam's *always* talkin' to Nervy about no woman bein fittin' to live if she ain't able to sling the pots an' skillets," Mrs. Bangs remarked when she had found her snuff.

"Have some o' mine," Sister Beard proposed, handing her snuff-box to Mrs. Evans. "An' hits my opinion that a slingin' pots an' skillets is what killed Nervy at last. Lord! Thar's Sam!"

"Mis' Mackey," he said, advancing toward the group, "was I good to Nervy?"

Mrs. Mackey looked upon his mottled face and tear-dimmed eyes without pity.

"Was I good to Nervy?" he asked, sternly.

"Well, Sam," Mrs. Mackey said, slowly, smoothing her white apron over her knee. "You orter know."

"Was I good to Nervy?" he thundered.

"Now, Sam," Mrs. Mackey said, boldly, "from my standpint you wasn't no better than you mought a bin."

"Sister Mackey means you mought a been more thoughtfuller like," Mrs. Beard softly spoke, from the fulness of her heart.

"Did not I buy that cussed machine f' Nervy?" hoping for a gleam of comfort.

"You got it too late, Sam."

"Didn't I git a cookin' stove?"

“Too late, too late, Sam.”

The burly figure cringed and writhed as she went on pitilessly.

“That dinner had to be on that table exactly at twelve; whether Nervy was sick or well them han’s had t’ be sarved. She never got t’ go nowhar—not even to meetin’. Why? Cause Sam Blanks rid after cattle an’ hawgs all day a Sundays an’ worked a weeky days. Thar’s jes one pusson livin’ in Sam Blankses house an’ that’s Sam Blanks hisse’f. You have took pow’ful good keer yourse’f, Sam; nobody’s disputin’ that p’int as I knows of.”

The man walked away, his eyes upon the ground.

“He’ll miss her,” Mrs. Beard sighed.

“He orter miss her an’ miss her bad,” declared the inexorable Sister Mackey.

“Our ole Bill mule missed ole Jack after pap sold him ’cause Bill an’ Jack pulled together ten or twelve year a haulin’; that’s the the way Sam’s gwine to miss Nervy, too,” Sister Evans said.

“Egszactly, Sister Ivins,” Mrs. Mackey endorsed the remark heartily.

“Sam will have t’ hire a nigger t’ fling in wood an’ sling pots an’ skilletts now.”

“Yes, an’ niggers aint the equinomicalest creeters in the world neither. Nervy’s dyin’s goin’ t’ cost Sam mo’n he’s a thinkin’”

"Sam's a good pervider—always plenty o' hawg an' hominy whar Sam air," Mrs. Beard said, with her soul full of pity for the stricken creature whose sobs filled the house.

"That's so," Mrs. Amos admitted, "an' fur's I'm intrusted taint nair bit o' my biznis an' f' my part I druther not have sich a big lot o' vittles an' have more kind treatment."

"I aint like you, Sister Amos. I druther my Jarn'd give me a outdacious beatin' ev'ry sadd'y night an' lemme have all the vittles an' clo'se I want as t' be lovin' an' git no grub ner clo'es neither. I'll take the beatin' every time t' git what I want," Mrs. Evans said with a laugh.

"Sam was *tolerable* good t' Nervy. Sam's sorter keerlis—no keerliser with Nervy than anybody else—he's nachelly keerlis." Mrs. Beard spoke earnestly.

"Po' Nervy was the religiourest woman you ever seen but she never had no chance f' nothin', po' thing! It was cook an' wash dishes an' wash dishes an' cook all the time an' Sam never seed she's a breakin' down," Mrs. Bangs sighed.

"Whot's his two eyes for if they aint t' see. Bet ef a hawg er er mule's in ha'f a mile o' Sam he'd see 'em pow'ful quick." Mrs. Mackey was a remorseless Nemesis.

"Sam was keerlis—I don't dispute *that*, but Nervy never wanted f' the needceserties o' life. Ef Dick Amos was always a billin' an' a cooin' an' a kissin' an' never bringin' no grub inter the house, Matildy'd mighty soon git tired o' that way o' doin' 'cause its mighty po' fillin'. Billin' an' cooin' an' kissin' don't stick to the ribs, it takes *vittles*—that's what," Sister Ponder observed.

"All the same I'll take cooin' an' kissin'. I was raised a pet—bein' paw's unly gal."

"Sister Amos looks like a pet," Mrs. Mackey said dryly.

A smothered laugh went 'round the circle.

"A little yaller kennary bird er a pet rabbit!"

"Sister Amos' ample figure swayed and rocked and shook as she vainly struggled against the laugh her quaint old neighbor's words and manner provoked.

"Yes, 'Tildy is a *purty* little pet! It's plum cur'is we aint seen that afore now."

"Hush!" whispered Sister Bangs.

"Sh-sh-sh," Sister Ponder warned.

"I think," Mrs. Vowel said, coming across the room, "we will have Mr. Lonius preach the funeral to-day. His regular appointment is at the school-house to-day, isn't it?"

"You're right, Mis' Vowel," said Mrs. Beard.

"Hits plum proper, Mis' Vowel," Mrs. Mackey assured her.

"That's what *I* say. Did you ast Sam?" Mrs. Bangs inquired.

"No, Mrs. Bangs, I did not."

"Sam—he don't need no axin'," Mrs. Evans decided.

"Mis' Vowel, you've been here three year a teachin' in that Canaan school-house an' a tryin' t' he'p folks out. The very las' time I seen po' Nervy alive she was a tellin' of me how good an' he'pful you was to her. The Lord'll bless you for it, Sister Vowel," and Sister Bangs buried her face in her apron and wept aloud.

A tear stole down the teacher's pale face, and again the half smile came and went.

At half past two in the afternoon Sister Beard announced that Brother Lonius was coming.

A crowd had gathered around the gate, and upon the fence sat the men and boys, while the house was thronged with women and children. The circuit-rider stood at the end of the large front room, his Bible and hymn-book lay on a small table in front of him.

Mrs. Vowel sat with the group near the window and the master of the house walked restlessly about the room.

A psalm was read, the preacher "lined" a hymn, which all sang; then a prayer was offered.

If uncultured, the eulogy which followed had at least the beauty of sincerity; his trembling sing-songy voice carried with it a moral and religious power—a specific agent for a specific purpose. Sincerity was the circuit-rider's most potent expression of eloquence and transcended every other form of his convincing persuasion. Sisters Mackey, Beard and Evans responded with fervent amens.

"Though walkin' thorny an' onthankful paths here our sister now treads the golden streets," spoke the preacher with much feeling.

"Nervy never expected no thankin'—she never wanted no thankin'," broke from Sam Blanks' quivering lips.

"You all talk like I'd killed Nervy or starved her! I didn't know a darned thing about it—was a huntin' hawgs in the swamps."

"Hush, Sam, nobody's said you killed Nervy—leastwise not shot her nor killed her with a ax. Hush up! Go on, Brother Lonius." Sister Bangs settled her ample figure back in her chair.

"What for?"

“ ’Cause its Christian-like. Dry up, Sam,” commanded Sister Mackey, with fire in her eye.

Sam Blanks was silent, his rough, unrefined nature at last grasping something conciliating if not comforting; his conscience, alas! awakening to the depth and breadth of his lifelong selfishness. The future stretched out before him like a pitiless, vast, uncompromising chaos of nothingness—now he realized the enormity of his sins against her whom he had sworn “to love and cherish.”

“Lis’n t’ Brother Lonnius, Sam,” Mrs. Beard said, coaxingly.

In Sam Blanks’ dense, coarse brain the idea of immortality had never taken root notwithstanding the many efforts Sister Mackey had made to impress upon him its vital importance. A feeling of injustice took possession of him. He looked down upon the chill, dead face—touched the folded, workworn hands and pitiously appealed to her who had so long meekly endured and made no moan.

“I bought you that sewen merchine—bought it jes f’ you, Nervy. An’ a bran new stove, too. No body will say I was good to you, Nervy—was I mean—say—was I mean t’ you, Nervy?” he implored.

“Taint no use o’ talkin’ t’ daid folks, Sam. You know she can’t hear nair word. Yer good-

ness comes too late, too late f' Nervy," Mrs. Mackey's rasping voice broke in upon his sighs and sobs.

"Thar's a gray hair on her head. I didn't know Nervy was a gittin' gray. She ain't old—Nervy ain't," sobbed Sam Blanks.

"No, Sam; Nervy ain't old in nothin' but hard work an' dis'pintment. She was a mighty purty young thing when you brung her here. She shows her keepin', Nervy does, po' thing!" Sister Mackey observed, smoothing down her apron.

A fresh torture presented itself. Sam Blanks' memory was merciless. He lived again that bright June day when he took his pretty, trusting bride from her mother's arms—safer refuge than a husband's—promising to fill her young heart with the love and peace which is born of perfect trust—alas! he recalled the harshness which had met her timid pleadings a year afterwards—pleadings and tears for a touch of her mother's hand, a glimpse of the old home love-light.

"Po' Sam!" Sister Beard sighed, watching the agony on his face.

"Ther ain't no use a cryin' over spilt milk, Sam. Ef yer'd a treated Nervy more like she'd a been a woman 'stead o' a mule she'd a been fat and sassy t'-day. This 's yer own work, Sam."

“‘Jedge not,’ Sister Mackey,” Mrs. Beard said softly.

“‘Why’nt somebody tell me I was a killin’ Nervy?’”

“*I never seen she’s po’ly!*” Sam Blanks declared, touching her smoothly brushed hair with his great, grimy land.

“Come ‘way Sam, come ‘way. She’s all right now. Nervy’ll never be po’ly no mo’” Sister Beard touched his arm and wept silently.

“Don’t take her away,” he begged with the persistency of a child.

“Let Nervy alone;” he implored. “I want to tell Nervy a heap o’ things. I know she’ll hear. I want t’ tell her I didn’t mean to treat her bad an’——”

“Too late, Sam, too late f’ Nervy.”

“Jedge not, Sister Mackey,” Sister Beard sobbed.

“Don’t take Nervy now, wait ‘til t’mor-rer,” Sam Blanks pleaded as they bore the casket to the grove of stunted cedars back of the garden where two short, sunken mounds mutely told a story of buried hope and ashes of love.

Sam Blanks’ life spread, panorama-like, before his quickened senses as he realized in a half-dazed way that it was Nervy they lowered into the grave, and when all was over he

allowed himself led away. Like a child he followed Mrs. Beard's bidding. The hopeless days and weeks dragged away on leaden feet; the past remained a dim, ghost-haunted memory; the future a long, gray, endless road stretched out before him, paved with heart-breaks and watered with drops of agony. Sam Blanks was rarely ever at home. Often he spent weeks alone with his helpless misery in the cypress swamps, until a year had drawn its torturous length between the doomsday of his happiness and the afternoon he came home, after a protracted stay in the swamps, sick, sick unto death.

He "didn't keer," he told Sister Beard.

Anything was better than the hopeless torture of the past year.

With the peace of Heaven in her soul, good Sister Beard had done what she could for him that long, dreary year "after Nervy died," and when he lay delirious in the throes of swamp fever she hovered around his pillow like an angel of mercy.

Like a Nemesis, Sister Mackey also attended. She shook her head ominously when the sick man muttered of "Nervy; cook-stove—sewin'—mershieae—forty—dollars—po'—Nervy—a darned—shame," and, as into the darkness of night his soul drifted, he whispered, "Too—late—too—late—f'—Nervy."

AN OLD MAID'S STORY.

[A LEAF FROM VALLOMBROSA.]

THE AFTERNOON SUN shone brightly into the dirty little waiting room, where I sat impatiently awaiting my train, and upon the closed windows the flies hummed drowsily. Only one more expectant passenger for the delayed up-train sat dreamily looking from a window. She was a gray-haired, refined looking woman.

"You seem impatient," she at last spoke.

"Indeed I am," I confessed.

"Going far?"

"Oh, no; only about twenty miles; but I am anxious to get back to my babies."

"You have a bright, happy face. I dare say you are a good mother," the woman said, walking over to my side.

"Thank you. I try to be a good wife and mother—and daughter," I added. "I have just been down home to nurse my father through a dangerous illness."

"Down home!" she repeated. "How good that sounds! Are you a contented woman?" she suddenly asked.

"I'm afraid not," I said, laughing. "I've not money enough to feel perfectly contented."

"Money!" she exclaimed. "Money! money! money! That ever-wanted money! Child, shall I tell you my story? I think you need to hear it. I can read no sorrow in your face. You are happy and careless and have no thought for the morrow. Nor do you appreciate your present happiness, because you do not realize it."

"Go on," I said, "I shall listen attentively and appreciatively. We have three hours to wait."

"I am an old maid! Are you startled at the frank confession?"

"I am an old maid, I repeat, and it is nobody's business if I am!"

"Unlike other old maids, I have never had a lover—no cherished, long-ago romance ever lingered lovingly in my thoughts, for I never was personally acquainted with a romance. I am also a member of the numerous family of 'Have-been.'

"And wherefore? Ah, I've been too much occupied with mundane affairs. A bread-and-butter battle holds no time for flights of fancy, no blissful moments of reverie for love or lovers, it is one season of unremitting toil, one long watchful struggle against the wolf at the door.

"I have not walked in darkness all these years. Not all of gloom has shrouded my

narrow, up-hill trail, for the sweet, fresh love of a little child lighted the way. I had some one to toil for, to love, nay, even to adore. The disinterested love of a little child is, we all know, the sweetest, purest and holiest of all love. It is the love of angels.

“This day-star was my niece, my bright little Angela—my only sister’s child. It is a story of her I set out to tell.

“We lived in the old home, the old square plantation home, where I was born and reared. It is still standing in picturesque beauty, half mantled in ivy.

“‘Plantation Content,’ as our home was called, was once the finest on the river, but when our army of slaves were freed, our tools were gone. Who can work and earn without tools? Therefore, our dear old Plantation Content became but a place of sad neglect, showing year by year, less indication of its former thrift and grandeur.

“A few families of our ex-slaves remained, but the majority sought pastures new and many of our broad, fertile acres were untended and neglected.

“My sister and I were left alone, the remnant of a large happy family. Two of our brave young brothers had fallen at Corinth and two older ones perished in Northern prisons. My sister’s husband reached home only to die and she, too, soon followed.

“The next year my parents laid down their burdens of sorrow and rested under the tangle of ivy in the garden.

“So we were left alone—my baby, Angela, and I—and life was a serious problem on our once prosperous Plantation Content. Over the broad lawn waved the high grass, fearlessly defiant of the rusty scythe. The stables and barn were empty and desolation and poverty were written everywhere.

“Inside, the dear old mansion showed still plainer Time’s relentless work. The once elegant carpets were worn and faded, and the stained, frescoed walls told a pitiful story of how the mighty had fallen. The faithful house-servants never left us and grew gray in our service. Though their presence made the bread-and-butter problem more difficult, they were a comfort and pleasure.

“The long years in which I taguht the neighborhood school seem now a blissful period—those years when my Angel walked by my side, slept in my arms and brightened my life with her innocent presence.

“When she was fifteen, I sent my child to the sweet seclusion of the Convent of El Sanctuario, where my sister and I had been educated, and for three succeeding years I lived alone at Plantation Content.

“The summer of her graduation she spent with a school friend in another state. I still

taught the neighborhood school and pinched and saved for my child.

“Then she sighed for home—and home she came, but alas! how changed!

“My laughing, rosy child had become a tall, pale, elegant woman. It almost breaks my old heart to recall the picture—even now, after so many years, the memory of that autumn comes back with cruel force.

“One Saturday afternoon, I shall never forget. I was sewing on the long back gallery, my child sat near me, the dying sunshine fell full on her face—a face so lovely, so pure and perfect that it made me think of the sweet white rose she held in her hand. The servant arrived from the country post office, whither she had sent him, and gave her several letters and packages of papers.

“I watched her eagerly rend the envelope of the selected letter, and with a glad cry she sat beside me to read.

“I went on with my work, silently awaiting her pleasure.

“‘Here’s Joe’s letter, Auntie. Want to read it?’

“And who is Joe?” I asked, taking the closely-written sheets from her hand and adjusting my glasses.

“Ah, Joe is your prospective nephew,” she laughed gaily.

"I was glad to hear that laugh and silently thanked God that my child could be glad and care free. It sounded like the gay freshness of a valley stream. I read the letter she gave me. It was protestations of love, it breathed fond promises, undying fealty and reckless devotion. A tiny pang shot through my selfish old heart—I recognized it as jealousy and choked it out of existence. I chided my narrow soul and for a moment despised myself, but the pain went as quickly as it came, went never to return again.

"Why don't you ask me about Joe, Auntie? He knows all about you, bless your beautiful heart!" she cried, giving me a spasmodic squeeze.

"Don't you love Joe, Auntie?"

"Do you?" I asked smiling.

"Of course I do!"

"Then, my Angel, I love Joe too," I said heartily.

"Thank you, Auntie, I knew you would."

"My child was herself again—her own bright, winsome self, and my old heart bounded gratefully.

"The days sped pleasantly. Angela assisted me in the school room and she also had organized a music class, which she taught at home. The old piano, a relic of the past, had been overhauled and tuned and she had bright-

ened the old rooms with her own handiwork until they seemed quite new and beautiful.

"This old Plantation Content is the dearest and sweetest home in the world," she declared, after wheedling Uncle Sam into mowing the lawn and tying up the rose vines.

"I am glad you love it, my child, I said gratefully.

"For several months letters came twice a week from 'Joe' and no fairy was ever more blithsome than my Angel.

"The next summer Joe came. What a handsome, devoted lover he was, and how I sympathized with and enjoyed their happiness!

"To joy as to anguish an end must come, and into the light of my child's life came a cruel darkness—a cloud so heavy with gloom that only the Infinite Hands were strong enough to lift it.

"One day we watched for Joe after school—he always came for us—but as it was growing late, we concluded to return without him—"

"There's my train!" I cried, joyfully. "Come, let's get aboard. I shall take you home with me and there we can talk uninterruptedly."

* * * * *

That evening, after tea, in my sweet homestead, I begged my friend to go on with her touching story.

She held my dimpled baby in her arms, gazing in tearful pleasure upon his sleeping face.

"I believe you do love children," my husband smiled in affectionate approval.

"You had started home from school," I prompted.

"Yes," she sighed.

"We had gone only a short distance, when we met our old cook, Aunt Mittie. She was crying bitterly and wringing her hands.

"Oh, Missy! Oh, my po' baby!" she cried. "My po' chile, Mammy caynt tell yer."

"Why, Mammy, what is the matter?" Angela asked, running to meet her. "What is it, Mammy?"

"Ah, honey! Po' Maws Joe!"

"Well, what about Joe?"

"Maws Joe—oh, I caynt tell dat!"

"Aunt Mittie," I said, calmly, "tell us what it is—"

"I caynt, honey; I caynt kill my baby."

"Tell your baby, Mammy—your baby who loves you. What is it about, Joe?"

"Mawse Joe done hurt—de gun done busted," she wailed.

On we sped—Angela seemed to fly homeward.

"I spec Maws Joe done daid," Aunt Mittie sobbed, "he's a shootin' birds f' Missy an de gun done busted."

Aunt Mittie was right. The glaze of death had already shut out the light of earth from Joe's beautiful eyes. He lay prone upon the blood-stained grass, his gun beside him, wrecked and useless now.

The weeks that followed seem, in retrospection, ghost-haunted and thick with the ashes of dead-and-buried love.

Angela shed no tear, made no moan, and, when the winter winds sighed among the pines, she said one dreary night: "Auntie, I so long to see the sweet-faced sisters at El Sanctuario—I need the counsel of the Reverend Mother. Will you be unhappy without your child?"

"My love," I answered bravely, "it will make me happy only to see my child content."

She smiled—such a wan, pitiful smile, kissed and thanked me, and the next week returned to El Sanctuario.

A year later, she wrote me a long, appealing letter, to which I gave the invariable reply: "My happiness is to see my child content." She would never come home again—my child, my good angel—the light of my dimming eyes would never be mine again.

A gulf vast as eternity, as bitter as death, as implacable as fate, divided my child from my aching heart. God pity the woman whose one ewe lamb is buried within convent walls!

I stifled the rebellious cry of my soul and worked harder to live bravely and well. The

ache that tugs at my heart is, I fancy, the same exquisite agony, the same tender regretfulness with which a mother remembers her dead child. I think even angels weep over such dumb, helpless misery.

* * * * *

A band of white crape fluttered in the balmy air of El-Sanctuario.

A band of white crape, emblematic of purity, and telling of the flight of a soul from earth to paradise.

Sister Angelique had reached the grand finale. My child had solved the riddle of life. She had crossed the Darien of Death and now her dear little form lay white and silent in the quaint old chapel.

Except the band of white crape, there were no unusual signs of mourning about the building. Little need had they for outward show, these sisters whose dress and manner of life were as those who lived within the shadow of the grave. The air was heavy with the breath of flowers and a sense of sadness was ever pervading; yet the presence of death brought no further sorrow, for it came to my child with a joyous invitation to go up Higher—to close a life of hard self-denial and austerity, to accept the reward for which the earth-struggle was a preparation. Not sorrow, but hope; a sense of gain, not of loss, was the pre-

dominant feeling at the funeral of my child—even in death she was mine.

The chapel was divided into two parts. The outer chapel into which the public were admitted and the inner chapel where, beyond the wooden grating, was a row of iron bars.

Beyond this hung a heavy black pall by means of which the nuns were shut in from all contact with the world.

The requiem mass had begun when the pall was drawn aside, revealing the interior of the inner chapel. In front of the outer chapel, on the Gospel side, was a pine coffin—absolutely plain and rude in construction. In that coffin reposed the frail figure of my own child, known here as Sister Angelique; her white mantle was draped about her shoulders and touched her scarce whiter cheek. In her beautiful hands was her written vow of chastity and a crucifix lay, a blessed emblem, above. In life a black pall had covered her sweet face, now it was drawn aside. The delicate features were a revelation. No stain of worldly dross was upon them, no lines by passion traced on that peaceful brow. A glance told a story of perfect rest, of absolute tranquility of soul, even the pangs of disease and death left no mark. An expression of repose, a glimmer of “joy unspeakable and full of glory” shone from her placid features.

The dead face of my child mutely spoke of her marvelous meekness and profound humility. The spirit of dedication had been strong within her. Her renunciation of the world had been complete, her absorption in God's work had been entire.

The sisters stood in a semi-circle back of the coffin, each holding a lighted candle while the funeral services were being chanted, then a sister came forward and spread a white napkin over my child's face and the plain, broad cover was screwed down.

I remember how the sisters knelt as they took my child away. If there was grief or tears on the faces of the kneeling sisters, the world never knew.

My own heart gave a throb of joy, as the thought came to me that the obligation my child had signed and sworn lasted only until death relieved her. In Heaven, she would again be my own child and I thanked God for the thought. It was Heaven-sent.

Long years have passed since then and my hair is almost white. I tread with uncertain steps down towards "the valley and the shadow." Sometimes, when alone, I fancy I hear the rustle of wings and a soft, tender melody seems floating through the air, and I strain my dim old eyes to catch a glimpse of my Angel, for I feel that she is ever near.

“FOR MISSY.”

A STORY OF THE SOUTH.

[A LEAF FROM VALLOMBROSA.]

A GROTESQUE PICTURE he made—nodding on the wooden bench in front of his cabin in the old deserted Quarter street.

His uncovered head—a cushion of gray wool bobbed up and down, then sank on his chest only to rise again in pitiful palsied jerks. Half closed were the dim old eyes that had once sparkled with merriment or softened with pity, for, according to plantation record, Daddy Ben was “a mighty good-hearted man.”

One foot was stretched upon a chair in front of him, a chair with a deer-skin seat. The other was twisted and turned with the aches and distortions of eighty rheumatic winters. Those old limbs were well-nigh useless now, and he sat in the sunshine and dreamed of the good old times when the now silent Quarter street was teeming with life and merry vigor—when he had “cut the pigeon wing” with a dusky belle and gaily led “down the middle” in the Old Virginia reel, or held his

own in the "Hen Wallow dance" with the best of them.

By his side, against the logs of his cabin, leaned his well worn crutches, for it had been many a day since Daddy had walked without his wooden props.

Down in the "big house" whose white walls and red roof gleamed through and above the oaks and shrubbery lived the last of the proud house of Taylor. A fine old family of antebellum times, but one remained, the daughter of Col. John Taylor, Mrs. Robert Royston.

The goodly heritage of a grand old name and the old, worn out plantation and—Daddy, was all that remained of the wealth and luxury to which Eva Taylor was born.

"How can I tell him? Think of it! Poor old Daddy nursed my father in his babyhood and all the years of his life he has been so true and faithful. I cannot tell him, Robert," Mrs. Royston sobbed.

"It is but natural you should feel as you do. I am warmly attached to the old man myself, but I know as you do that he will be as well taken care of there as here," replied Mr. Royston.

"I don't know any such thing nor do you," she declared with spirit. "The idea of one of our people being sent to the Poor House! Oh, Robert! something must be done. We *must* keep Daddy!" she cried.

"Of course," she went on softening (as women will) when she saw her husband's troubled face, "I don't expect you to feel as I do, but honestly, Robert, if Daddy was one of your own dear old darkies would you send him to the Poor House?"

"Indeed! Do you remember what became of Maum Maria?" her husband asked, smiling now.

"Oh, but Maum 'Ria was rude and so unpleasant, too. She acted as if I didn't know what was good for my own child. I was so glad she went to the Poor House—cross old thing! But to send Daddy—dear old Daddy Ben! Robert, you can't appreciate—"

"My dear Eva, I do appreciate your feelings. It cut me to the heart to send Maum Maria but I was obliged to do it. Now be reasonable. It is a question of bread and butter, my love. We are simply too poor to maintain a useless old negro, no matter how much we may long to keep him with us, to smooth his downward path; we simply cannot, my dear. You had best tell him, he will take it kindest from you."

"Tell him what, Robert?"

"That he will be taken to the Poor House to-morrow morning."

"Do you think I can make him understand?" she tearfully inquired when she had laid the little one in his crib.

"I don't see why, I am sure."

"You know how garrulous Daddy is—he begins to talk the minute he sees me and goes on and on. Oh, Robert! it's a dreadful thing to do. I know papa wouldn't like it."

"Go on, Eva, make the old man understand that he leaves to-morrow for —."

"Don't say it again!" she cried hysterically. "Oh, the shame, the humiliation, the pity of it! Too poor to feed one poor, old worn-out darkey, worn-out, too, in our service!" she sobbed.

"Go on—before the boy awakens—that is if you are going at all."

"You need not be so cross. Heaven knows it's hard enough as it is," she sighed, tying the faded ribbons of her garden hat.

"I can't help it, papa," she sobbed as she walked down the grass-grown Quarter street. "We are so wretchedly poor," she whispered, as if defending her action against the accusing voice of her dead-and-gone father.

Daddy Ben still dozed peacefully, while from the martin box, nailed under the eaves, came an encouraging twitter, a pleasant flutter and then a surprised chirping of the entire family. From two bee gums under a plum tree came the hum and buzz of busy workers, and a big red rooster crowed warningly as Mrs. Royston approached.

Through her unchecked tears she saw the knotted, trembling hands folded over the feeble old heart whose every pulsation was of loving loyalty for her and hers.

"How can I tell him!" she said, half strangled by tears, She touched the drooping head gently. "Daddy!" she whispered chokingly.

A prolonged snore was the reply.

"Daddy! Poor, pitiful old daddy!"

"Huh!" the old man grunted, half opening his eyes. "Huh! Who dat?"

"Daddy, I came to tell you that—"

"Whotcher cryin' 'bout, Missey, honey? Li'l son sick?"

"Ah, no."

"Maws Rob't?"

"No, daddy, I came to tell you that Robert said—"

"Yessum, Maws Ro'bt mighty fine ge'man."

"Robert said—" she began again, desperately.

"Dullaw, chile! Hokkum yer a weepin' 'bout dat? Ef Maws Rob't was jes a perfesser—let 'lone a 'zorter, he'd git dar; but, honey, hit do sho' pear lak Maws Rob't ai'nt a studyin' de sallyvation o' his soul; hit p'ntly do look dat a way. But doe," he continued re-

flectively, "Maws Robt's folks is Prista'yans, an' me'n' dem caint set hawses some how er rether. Sent Poll, he pi'ntly says 'Simon Peter lub dow me mor'n dese?' den's when Sent Poll's a aimin' 'zactly 't Maws Rob't, cos dat ge'mman air in a tight hole, sho's yer bawn. Missey, de watter got t' go clean ober Maws Rob't, 'fo' he kin call sallyvation his'n. But don't be no ways cowed, Missy, cos de Lawd gwine nip Maws Rob't when he aint a lookin', some dese days. He'll be cotched yit, cos dat de promos'. I gits t' my pra'r yistiddy."

A satisfied chuckle shook his withered frame, and, as if suddenly remembering, he slowly drew his foot from the chair.

"Jes do look 't dis onmannerly ole nigger! Mr. Benjamine Taylor, nigger gen'man, a 'longin' t' de Taylor 'stocracy—a sott'n here same's a disreggardable ole hawg an' my young mistis' a stan'in! Nigger, be shame, *be shame!* Here, Missy, jes tek dis seat and sot down. Skuze yer ole fool daddy, honey, I bin a chatt'n wid yer pawpy, honey, an' Maws Joe, t'day. Missy, chile, deys a worsh-pot o' gole bay'd unner dat swee'gum down in de hawse lot—jes t' de lef' o' de swee'gum. I lays Missy's a rich 'om'n yit," he cackled gleefully.

"Robert said—"

"Yessum, I knows he say hit *aint dar*, cos dem blue coats an' gray coats all hunt f' dat pot o' gole endurin' de wah."

"Daddy, Robert told me to tell you—"

"Dullaw ! Missy, I knows 'bout dat money, *I does*, honey-gal, cos I hope Maws Joe ba'y hit myse'f. I tries an' tries t' study whar's de place an' dis mawnin' Maws Joe an' Maws Jarn bofe tell me whar dat gole."

"Robert—"

"He, he, he! Skuzin' yer copperosity, Missy, but Maws Rob't don't know a Gawd's word 'bout dat pot o' gole, Nome, cos Maws Rob't ain't no Taylor, honey. Nome, Maws Jarn done git kilt' 'n' me and Maws Joe—yer riccerlic yer brer' Joe, Missy? Naw, yer don't, cos he die when yer was a teenchy li'l baby, lak li'l son."

"Robert said—"

"Lawda mussy, honey, Maws Rob't don't 'long 't dis fambly, an' he jes *dunno*, dat's a fac', he *jes dunno*. Honey, when I fines dat money! Um-um-um! won't Missy strut an' look fine? I lay yer don't hafter cook no mo', chile."

"I wish you would find it, then. Daddy, listen."

"Yessum."

"Daddy, Robert says—"

"Es I was a noratin,' Missy, when I fine's dat gole, den I'm gwine ober Jerding. All whot keeps me out'n de Prommos' Lan' is dat money—unner dat swee'gum in de hawse lot.

Yessum, when I gits dat money out'n dat pot f' Missy, den I gwine ober Jerding t' de Prommos Lan', whar my folks is a wait'n f' Daddy, an'—an'—"

Again had kind nature transported Daddy to the land of dreams.

Mrs. Royston still lingered, half hopeful, half dreading the ordeal. She stood looking upon the wrinkled, shrunken face, so placid now.

"Daddy, poor old Daddy!"

Again she called:

"Daddy!"

"'Pear lak you's sorter onris'less, Missy," he said, opening his eyes with a start.

"Daddy, Robert says—"

"Yessum, so I heern', but doe hits dar, all de same. I lay I fin'e hit, too. Honey, dat gole in de shot bags what Maws Joe put hit in. De big worsh-pot ontop de li'l worsh-pot—done kivered hit bodaciously up. I gwine fine hit t' night, chile, cos I gotty git ober Jerding dis week an' ain't got nair minute t' was'e. When I han's dat gole money ober t' you, den I puts out f' de Prommos Lan'; dat's whot I up ter, chile."

"I wish you would listen to me, Daddy."

"Yessum, Missy."

"Robert says—"

"Look out, dar! See dat squorpin?"

Mrs. Royston did a very undignified thing in running half way up an old ladder which leaned against the cabin roof.

“‘Es I was a zerbin,’ Missy, yer won’t hafter cook an’ warsh de deeshes no mo.’ When I fine’s dat gole, honey, dese white trash whot settled down on dishyer plantation whar high tone’ niggers used t’ be—I say, Missy, dat trash gwine be extonished, sho’s yer bawn. Huh! he grunted, ‘I lay I tells Maws Jarn the fus’ thing I tells atter I steps into de Prommos Lan’. I tells Maws Jarn how proud Missy totin’ herse’f ’mongst de white trash on dis place. Jes yer wait, dawder, ’til Daddy git dat gole.’”

“I have heard of that pot of gold all my life. I wish we could find even ten dollars of it, Daddy. Listen. Robert said—”

“‘Side de swee’gum, honey. Daddy’l git yer a basti’l full.’”

“You can’t dig. Your’e too old, Daddy.”

“Who? Me? Dullawdamussy! Honey, I ain’t so ole. I jes sorter tired-lak, dat’s all,” he cackled.

“I must tell you what Robert—”

‘I knows he say hit ain’t dar, but de naix time Maws Rob’t go t’ town I gwine dig un’ner dat swee’gum, I is. I lay I git dat money, too.

“Robert is going to town this afternoon, he told me to tell you—”

"I knows, Missy. Yer old Daddy know 'zackly whot Maws Rob't say. Yer g'long, now, hone, I comin' 'treckly. I spec' li'l son need yer."

Mrs. Royston felt relieved from her unpleasant errand, though could not for her life have told why. She came back to the house through the family burying ground back of the garden and soon stood between the graves of her parents. She was grievously perplexed, feeling in a nameless way that she had been disloyal to the sacred trust reposed in her.

To have obeyed her husband would have been a dereliction of duty towards her father. She came, as she had often come before, to confide her sorrows to the senseless marble covering her dead.

There, indeed, comes a time in every life when in crucifixion of soul the cry for guidance, for sympathy, for what is most sorely needed, is wrung from unwilling lips. The response is swift and true. A feeling of sweet submission fills the old rebellious spot in the soul and strength, God-given, comes. The horizon of thought widens and brightens, and the soul is stronger for these communings and travail, in which is blended neither credulity or imagination, but God's love, pure and simple. It is He who hears and responds.

"Papa," she whispered, her arms about the cold marble cross. "I can't drive Daddy

away—we would have suffered, mamma and I, but for Daddy—after you went—I can't even tell Daddy to go—if we could but find that money—we could keep Daddy—and the dear old home—help me, papa!" she sobbed in grief's unreason.

She pressed her lips to the blessed name on the cross and, stronger in spirit, returned to the house.

Though all unseen, a Listener heard, and as "a father pitieth his children," the tender, comforting Love was hers.

* * * * *

Daddy Ben was true to his promise. No sooner had Mr. Royston ridden past the gin house on his way to town than Daddy's cracked voice sounded in his favorite hymn in the back yard.

"Whar now is good ole Danyel?
Safe, Lawd, in de Prommos Lan'."

Nearer the quavering notes came :

"Sister Mary's a singin' in de Prommos Lan',
A crown on her head an' a harp in han',
Safe, safe, Lawd, in de Prommos Lan'."

Mrs. Royston went to the hall door and saw Daddy laboriously dragging a pick and spade. He was as garrulous as was his habit, when Mrs. Royston and the baby accompanied him to the horse lot.

After two hours' hard, persistent work both were exhausted, and Mrs. Royston hopeless.

"Nebber do t' gib hit up, Missy. I gwine t' keep on, cos de Lawd done promised me de strenk t' fine dat money 'n' He nebber breaks a prommos, honey."

"Hits de root o' dis swee'gum and dat mulb'ay what make de diggin' so hard. Hits dar, doe, de big pot kiverin' de li'l pot whot got de gole in hit. G'long t' de house, Missy, yer ole Daddy gwine 't git dem yaller boys 'fo he stop. I gotty hurry, too, cos I got a 'engagement in de Prommos Lan' t'morrer an' mus' step ober Jerding twixt now an' den. G'long, honey—stop, Missy, shake han's wid yer ole Daddy, cos yer see, chile, I mough't git off 'fo' I see yer ergin.' Gawd bress de gal an' good luck t' yer! Ef yer got faif de size o' a teenchy mustard seed, honey, dats plenty big. Bress Gawd, my faif in finin' dat pot o' gole f' Missy is big as de gin-'ouse. G'long to de house. Good by, Missy, I be sho t' tell Maws Jarn 'n' Maws Joe 'an' ole Miss."

"I is dat," he chuckled, when he had watched her out of sight.

"She dunno I hyeard Maws Rob't talkin' 'bout sen''n' me t' de po' house long wid dem rambuntious white trash. Po' li'l gal! She try to tell Daddy, but I ain't got de heart t'

let one o' Maws Jarn's chill'en be so mottified an' pestered—so I jes p'intly talk an' gab an' gab an' talk so's she got no chance to tell whot Maws Rob't *do* say. I ain't got no' scasion to be staying' 'roun' here atter I fines dat money."

From the hole dug under the tree Daddy Ben scratched the loose earth with his knotted hands. He leaned far over, now and then using pick or spade.

His slender strength was almost spent, and realizing this, he fervently though somewhat spasmodically prayed as he toiled.

"Jes lemme, Lawd," he panted. "Jes please sir, lemme fine dat big pot whot a kiverin' de lil' one whot's got Missy's money in it. Hit's all f' Missy, Lawd, cos when I gits dat gole f' her I spec t' step crost jerding. Lawd, jes please sir let dis dy 'um'le sarbent fine dat gole for Missy, Lawd, f' Missy—please, sir."

* * * * *

"I saw the keeper of the poor house to-day and a wagon will come for Daddy Ben in the morning," Mr. Royston said at supper.

"Very well."

"I hope," Mr. Royston continued, when they were seated under the honeysuckles in the moonlight, "I hope the old man will get off quietly. You must not make a scene, Eva."

"I shall not," she promised.

"Don't go to saying good bye and all that."

"No, I have said good bye to Daddy. I cannot account for the feeling, but I don't believe Daddy will ever go to the poor house."

"Did he say as much to you?"

"No, indeed, Robert. I just feel that he will not go."

* * * * *

The poor house wagon arrived promptly at nine the next morning, and anxious to have the unpleasantness over with, Mr. Royston drove with the keeper up into the Quarter street after Daddy Ben and his belongings.

Though the cabin door stood invitingly open, there was no trace of the old man. He had certainly decamped, was the general opinion. The search was given up and the wagon sent away.

"I thought you were going to make some flower beds for me," Mrs. Royston said reproachfully to her husband, as he settled himself for a smoke.

"I can't find the spade anywhere."

Mrs. Royston smiled as yesterday's delusion came back to her.

"I wonder where Daddy can be. He never visits."

"I prefer the spade to Daddy," laughed her husband.

"I can find the spade, though I prefer to know of Daddy's whereabouts. The spade is in the lot. Come with me, Robert. I have a confession to make."

"Are you not anxious about Daddy Ben? I feel wretchedly," confessed Mr. Royston, as he opened the lot gate.

"Not at all. Somehow—I cannot explain it, but I feel that all is well with dear old Daddy."

* "I feel very uncomfortably, I must say," as he closed the large, heavy gate.

"Take son, please, I will get the spade," and walking rapidly forward for a moment, she suddenly stopped.

"Oh, Robert!" she cried, "here's poor old Daddy!"

"Come quickly, Robert!"

Beside the excavation which had cost him so dear, half covered by a great, rusted iron kettle, lay Daddy Ben. One of his twisted hands clutched a torn and mouldered shot-bag from which peeped and glittered the long hidden treasure.

Daddy Ben's work "for Missy" was accomplished.

Below, one of his feet touched a huddled mass of treasure bags in a smaller iron vessel.

"The old man is dead, Eva," Mr. Royston whispered, awestricken.

"Yes," she answered in faith most holy, "Daddy is 'safe in the Prommos Lan'."

SISTER MACKEY'S FEELIN'S.

[A LEAF FROM VALLOMBROSA.]

JUST UP FROM the confused tangle of bamboo and yellow jessamine vines on the creek, where tall, sturdy oaks had grown from saplings of twenty years ago—where the double log house, with its stick-and-dirt chimneys at either end, its long gallery in front and a rail fence marking the boundary of the yard, lived Sister Mackey and her “feelin’s.” A red rooster flaunted his glistening plumage up and down the sunny gallery and a hen clucked coaxingly to her brood of sons and daughters near the kitchen door. A spinning wheel stood unbanded on the gallery and the log walls were adorned by saddles, bridles and plow-gear hanging on nails. Just outside the gate stood a wagon, its pole resting on the fence and near it stood two pre-historic mules stretching their gaunt necks to nibble the new blooms of the dogwood saplings. A smart little bantam crowed a hilarious appreciation of his content from the ash hopper in the front yard.

“Shoo!” cried Sister Mackey, waving her broom. “It jes nachelly hurts my feelin’s t’ see that little rooster make sich a fool o’ his-

se'f an' him sich a mite." That Sister Mackey had the only feelin's in all Canaan the neighbors were well aware; while *she* could speak and act with impunity, without fear or hindrance, the neighbors must needs be careful for Sister Mackey had copyrighted all the "feelin's" in Canaan and held *fee simple* deeds to every conscience, except one for herself, in a radius of twenty miles—from Holly Springs in Dallas county to Camden in Ouachita.

From her half-way vantage ground she "kept up" with the private affairs of every resident on the big road; all of whom had suffered and trembled from Sister Mackey's extraordinary criticisms and hard judgments.

Sister Mackey had a weak back and a rheumatic imagination. She reveled on a watch tower of observation for evil and found ruin running rampant when no one else dreamed of its shadow. The sole daughter of the log house of Mackey was "Sissy"—a pretty, dark-eyed girl of seventeen, who enjoyed life with the exuberance of youth in spite of her mother's Argus eye. Dick and Bill, her big, overgrown brothers, were her most loyal knights, and often stood between Sissy and their mother's ever present "feelin's." Like all young people, they were fond of fun and frolic and needed some outlet for their superabundant vitality, and when their buoyancy of spirit

fairly bubbled over, Sister Mackey's unhealthy imagination saw wreck and ruin in every escapade. She was a Casandra crying out against the world, the flesh and the devil, a Sisyphus, forever rolling the rock of propriety up the hill of impossibility.

If her children deceived her it was because, from pure contrariness, she denied them every pleasure she thought they would enjoy, so, when Dick came in that April morning with the information that a "fishfry" was to be on the creek the next day, his mother exclaimed: "I've been expectin' jes sich. Soon's I seed them ar dawg wood blossoms out thar in the road, says I to myse'f, 'now them fool chill'n o' mine 'll want t' quit work short off an' go a gallivantin' off a fishin'.' Want t' go fishin', Dick?"

"Nome," Dick promptly responded from the well where he was watering the calves. "Wouldn't be caught thar."

"Me nuther," Sissy declared from the kitchen window.

"Got yer cawn all planted, Dick?"

"Yes'm, me an' Bill got thru this mawin'."

"Whar's Bill?"

"Gone t' the bottom t' feed the hawgs."

"Whar's Pap?"

"Dunnome."

"Well, I'm gwine t' that thar fishfry t'morrer an' yers all gwine too," Sister Mackey de-

clared, settling her spectacles on her high nose.

"Oh, no, Maw, le's don't!" Sissy begged, winking at Dick. "I wouldn't go f' a gold nigger."

"Good greshus, Maw!" Bill said, as he rode past the house to the well. "What yer want t' drag us off t' that thar fishfry fer? Hits the ongodlyes' place on top side o' groun; a fishfry's turryble."

"All the same," Sister Mackey said, with fire in her eye, "yer alls gwine!" I'll go over t' the crib an' see if I caint git some aigs t' make some sweet cakes out'n."

She caught a big sun-bonnet from a nail and sauntered across the road to the corn crib. She had just crawled through the lot bars when Sissy sang out: "Glory! Swing yer pardners?" "Shet up, Sissy, hits a plum sin t' do po' Maw this way," soft-hearted Dick said, imploringly. "No sich ov a thing! Hits a sin the way she do us. Swing, Sissy!"

Bill whistled "Chicken in the bread-tray" and Sissy executed a double shuffle, waving a dish-rag and calling the "figgers." She then "swung" Bill, Dick and the dish-pan in quick succession.

"Hello!"

At the little square window in the end of the log kitchen, appeared a weazened, red face, smiling a good-natured approval on the antics

of his big boys and the light of his eye, Sissy.

"Pap," she whispered, "Go 'roun' an' watch f' us, we're jes bustin' t' dance. Don't yer fergit t' sneeze, Pap, *don't* fergit."

"Be keerful, honey, be keerful, don't hurt Maw's feelin's," whispered the old man.

"When I git married," said Bill, "I'm a gwine to find a gal 'thout feelin's; doggone feelin's." With this he seized a chair and pranced toward the door, addressing it as "Miss Becky." The tins on the shelf rattled and jingled and the dishes on the table were in a jolly shake as if enjoying the stolen fun. Dick whistled "Money Musk," forgetting in the inspiration of the moment his loyalty to "Maw" and Sissey capered and bounced, while Bill and "Miss Becky" ran riot in tip-toe-lady.

"Ah-choo! Ah-choo-oo!" came warningly from the inner room.

In a trice Dick had leaped from the back door and Bill went whistling to the well. Sissy quietly, if hastily, put things to rights in the kitchen, and when Sister Mackey came in, each were innocently quiet.

"Thar's gwine t' be a fishfry, Pap, is yer gwine?" his wife inquired, seating herself with a grunt.

"Dunno, bleive I druther not," he replied, crowding a wad of tobacco into his mouth.

"I done got these aigs, yer gotter go now—oh, Lawd! my back's a killin' me! Is yer

forgot how cake looks, Pap? Sweet cakes?"

"I druther have 'taters an' greens es sweet cakes," said the old man, looking furtively beyond the wife of his bosom—away off into the green depths of the forest.

"All the same, yer'll *eat* sweet cakes! I 'low t' show Tildy Amos an' Sister Beard es how I aint ferget how t' cook 'f I does live 'mongst wile cats an' panthers. Git the basket, Pap."

The old man arose from his seat and walked briskly into the house. He was a picturesque figure. His gray, home-spun trousers were made by "Sister Mackey's busy fingers—"cut out," she was wont to boast, by "the rack of the eye." Though curtailed in length at the bottom, they were wide and broad and generously long above the waist and were hitched high over his chest, within an inch or two of his whiskers. In the back his broad shirt collar touched the "gallus" buttons on his shoulders.

Pap's appearance gave one an uneasy sensation—an apprehension of a possible weakness somewhere in his harness.

"Look at Pap," Sissy whispered to Dick who now sat on the kitchen table. "He looks like he was a tryin' t' pace an' the hobble was too tight."

The next day dawned beautifully clear, and Sister Mackey donned a new calico dress, a big white apron and sun-bonnet, in honor of the occasion. She had stood some time before the little square mirror arranging her hair with more than usual care. A sad, dissatisfied expression upon her sour old face plainly expressed her thoughts.

"I look and look and find my cheeks so lean,
And hollow eyes in wrinkled brow doth shroud,
As though two stars were creeping under clouds."

In due time the family, with Sister Mackey in the lead, were on the picnic grounds.

"Look at Pap!" Sissy cried to Dick, "he's hitched up tighter'n ever. Pap walks jes like a dawg in oats. See how high he steps?" A loud, uproarious laugh was the response.

"No wonder, Pap's hitched up f' the fish-fry," Bill added.

"What in this worl' ails them fool chillin? What yer laughin' at, Dick? Oh, my po' back! I caint stir a step 'thout some o' my own flesh an' blood turnin' agin me an' a hurtin' my feelin's. Chill'n aint like they used t' be, no how; in ole times chill'n was *rizz!*" she snapped, walking on.

"Maw looks plum like a tuckey hen a huntin' f' a nes'" was Sissy's next criticism. Bill joined Dick's laugh and Sister Mackey

turned about and demanded the cause of their mirth.

"I was jes a laughin' 't Sissy, a devilin' her about possum-jawed Pete Haley," Dick explained.

"Lawd, what a liar Dick Mackey air! Ah, my po' back'll kill me yit," groaned Sister Mackey.

"We wasn't studyin' yer feelin's, Maw, honest, we wasn't," Bill assured the angry woman.

" 'Tain't nobody studyin' feelin's 'ceptin' Maw," Dick laughed teasingly.

"Yer walkin' right over my feelin's now."

Yea, verily! Sister Mackey's feelin's were scattered everywhere—over the fresh green of the grass and the blue of the sweet wood-violets. Even the brightness of that changeful April sky was veiled by a misty consciousness of apprehension, a vague fear of a shower of reproaches or rain.

Sister Mackey's name is legion; we have all met her and we all know the suspicion that poisons her life. Every virtue has its relative vice, and excessive uprightness of living often degenerates into Pharisaical hardness. Egoism is the Alpha and Omega of a Sister Mackey, and her sense of justice grows into a lack of sympathy for human frailty. The young are gay of heart, bright of temper, merry of

face, sweetly innocent, they neither see nor fear evil and Heaven smiles upon them.

We have all noticed, too, that envy, that invariable characteristic of a small mind, occupies a front seat in Sister Mackey's soul. True nobility and fine generosity feels no pang when another succeeds where other efforts, as strong, have failed. Sister Mackey's trail up the hill of Difficulty was blocked by great boulders of outraged and trampled "feelin's"—every rose held thorns to wound and every wind brought a fresh insult. To her the swiftly-flowing creek held snakes instead of fishes—snakes put there especially to bite and kill *her*.

Selfish, suspicious, envious, malicious Sister Mackey! Alas, that you are so numerous.

"Dick Mackey, you're walkin' smack, dab on my feelin's!" Sister Mackey whined.

With a quick movement, Dick swung himself into a low growing oak, and, with a comical expression, asked:

"Whar is they, Maw?"

"Git out'n that tree, Richard Jeremiah! Willyam, git Richard Jeremiah out'n that scrub oak, and I'll wipe up Canaan with him," she cried, excitedly.

"If yer have picked up them feelin's what yer had scatterin' 'round everywhere, I'll git down."

"Git out'n that thar tree!"

"I be sho to step on yer feelin's if I do—is yer picked 'em all up, Sissy?" he called from a high limb.

"Stay thar, then," and Sister Mackey left in disgust.

"Yonners Miss Ivins an' Miss Amos, Maw," Sissy said, pointing to a group of women, babies and dogs under a clump of trees near the creek.

"Well! I do know in my time if thar ain't Sister Beard *an'* Sister Broadnax *an'* Sister Mackey! What did *you* come here for, Sister Mackey—you ole Georgy grunter!" Sister Evans cried, advancing and offering her hand.

"Jes t' devil Sister Ivins," Sister Mackey replied, in high good humor.

"Umk!" grunted Sister Amos.

Sister Beard smiled.

"Umk! *Umk!*

"What's the matter, Tildy?"

"Sister Mackey's plum frisky to-day, wonder what's up? Hope she left her feelin's and back-ache at home."

"Law, Tildy, how you do run on! You're young yit, honey. Jes let Sister Mackey do the talkin' an' she's all right—she'll fergit she's got feelin's."

"I know," laughed Sister Amos. "Jes let her wonder back t' Georgy an' she's all ight."

"That's all—an' it don't hurt us to listen yer know. The Bible says, 'A merry heart does 'bout as much good's medicine' you know, Tildy, honey."

"Y-e-s-'m," Sister Amos slowly agreed, for her gospel lights were exceedingly hazy.

Sister Mackey was now settled in the midst of her neighbors, while the young people fished and flirted lower down the creek.

"How's Sandy's foot, Sister Brodnax? Didn't he git his foot mashed on a lawg? When I heerd 'bout it, I got to studyin' 'bout ole Tom Akers, back in Georgy." Sister Mackey paused to light her pipe.

"She's off," Sister Amos whispered.

"Give her a push," said Sister Evans softly.

"Sandy's foot is almost well, he is down on the creek fishing. What is it you began to tell, Sister Mackey?" Sister Brodnax asked when she had found her knitting.

"Tom Akers, as big a rarin', tarin', dar'-devil as ever crost water."

"She's across the Georgy line," whispered Sister Amos and sighs of relief went around.

"Tom Akers wa'nt no 'count on top o' dirt; he'd go t' meetin' an' git up an' talk an' say, 'Breetherin,' I'm a po, worm o' the dust, I aint fit t' live,' an' it's the unly time he was ever knowd t' tell the straight, hones' truth

was when he said his say in meetin.' An' mor'n that he was the ongodlyes' lookin' feller *I* ever sot eyes on."

"How did he look?"

"Like the devil 'fo' day; his eyes was the crostest that ever looked into a jug. Lindy, his wife, was a pow'ful fine woman, though, an' folks did wonder what she had Tom for. She hurt my feelin's mighty bad when she tuk him, for me an' Lindy was gals together, an' I thought a power o' Lindy, po' gal."

The vile little pipe needed attention, and Sister Amos improved the opportunity. "Why, Sister Mackey! Was you jealous?"

Sister Mackey ignored the remark and calmly continued.

"Yes, we was gals together an' neighbors, too. My pap's tater patch jined her dad's cawn fiel'; we was closte neighbors, me an' Lindy was—an' when she whirls in an' ups an' ma'yrs Tom Akers they settled down to housekeepin' in a cabin in her dad's lan'. Tom was worser cocked-eyed than ever when Lindy's dad made him go t' work. Hits curis how so many nice, good women do git sich ornary men. I've thought a heap 'bout that. Just look at me an' Pap!"

"So've I," said Sister Amos.

"Women's curis critters, anyhow, Sister Evans remarked, smiling at Sister Brodnax.

"A woman," said Sister Brodnax, earnestly, "understands only what she feels, and a man sees things as they really are, remaining the while indifferent to their relation to anyone except himself."

"But women is sich fools, Sister Brodnax."

"Ah, no; we have only to look into the heart of a true woman to see there an impulse as strong as life, as lasting as eternity, to look up to, even to adore and follow the man she loves, because, Sister Mackey, God made woman a compassionate, forbearing, loving creature."

"That sounds mighty sweet—most like preachin'," Sister Beard said, smiling.

"Hit *is* preachin', but I don't 'zactly see the pint yit," Sister Mackey said, doubtfully.

"You see," began Sister Brodnax, "women believe more, endure more, hope more and love more than men. I'm glad God made us so."

"I ain't. Why don't women have *mo' sense*?" Sister Mackey demanded, savagely.

"'Cause they ain't built that way," Sister Amos laughed. "But what become o' Tom What-you-call him?"

"Tom Akers? Lindy she may's Tom, and they got along tollerble well 'til Lindy tuck sick, an' then things went sorter bad; in fact, everything was whopper-jawed after Lindy tuck her bed. One day I went down thar t'

see 'bout how Lindy was a gittin', an' I tuck a pitcher o' merlasses with me f' her. I didn't take but a few, but they was mighty good merlasses, an' when I gits t' the gate I sees the ole cow a lowin' at the bars, an' inside the lot the ca'fe was a bellerin' fit t' bust. I thought hit curis that Tom didn't milk that cow an' hit mighty nigh nine o'clock. Hit nachelly hurt my feelin's t' see things a goin' so awful whopper-jawed. Well, I went on in, an' behole an' lo! thar lay po' Lindy *daid*—jes as daid as ever a body got."

"What a pity," sighed Sister Beard.

"Umk! *Um, Um*—" from Sister Amos.

"Bes' thing she could a did."

"Whar's Tom Akers all that time?"

"I hyerd a pow'ful takin on an' behole! I finds Tom in the shed with his foot mighty nigh cut off an' mos' bled t' death. Then I see Miss Farris a comin' an' I got her t' send her boy after mo' folks.

"Lawd! I never see sich times 'fo' ner since."

"Did Tom die?"

"N-a-w! Nothin' couldn't kill as no 'count a dawg's Tom Akers. In six month's time he was over a courtin' me—sich a po', onary dawg's Tom Akers wasn't wuth killin'."

"Why didn't you take him, Sister Mackey?"

“Didn’t want him, Tildy, I’d druther have Pap. I always liked Pap when we was kids; he was a good lookin’ feller when he was on his fust legs—Pap was—jes like my Bill. I think Bill’s a purty boy.”

“Sister Amos laughed outright, the others glanced at Bill as he sat fishing, his long legs hanging over a cypress log in mid-stream and his feet projecting like wooden frames on which hung his great shoes. Sissy called them “fiddle boxes.” Bill’s straight, red hair hung behind a pair of ears that would have made a donkey die of unadulterated envy. Surmounting all, like a helmet with razed vizor, was his big straw hat-brim turned up against the crown with reckless disregard of wind and weather. All the iron in Bill’s blood shone in big freckles on his hands and face—like smouldering camp-fires on a prairie.

Only mother-love could see beauty in that freckled, good-natured face.

“Thar’s Dick Amos—wonder what he wants,” Sister Mackey said as that person appeared.

Dick Amos smiled down from his six-feet-four altitude upon them—stooped and patted his wife’s head and smiled again.

“If you all want t’ see a purty man, jes looky here!” Sister Amos said proudly, as she arose and stood beside her husband.

Dick Amos seemed a giant beside the little blonde who smiled into his brown eyes. So strong in heart and body.

“Whose armor is his honest thought;
Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
Who having nothing—yet hath all.”

All of Ouachita county, Arkansaw, held no happier man than “Tildy’s giant,” Dick Amos.

“I jes nachelly b’lieve Tildy an’ Dick’s in love yit,” laughed Sister Evans.

“Tildy aint got no sense, I aint s’prised,” Sister Mackey scornfully remarked. An’ they’ve been may’rd more’n ten year, aint it ten year, Tildy? Oh, my po’ back’s killin, me!

It was a very unfashionable state of affairs in Canaan, Tildy knew, but that baptism of approving light from her giant’s brown eyes was dearer to her than a whole cotton crop—more rejuvenating than any fabled fountain of youth and beauty. The log house she and Dick called home was a palace of delight and luxury, and while Dick toiled in the fields Tildy kept the house and yard tidy and thought of how pleased he would be to rest in the morning-glory bower on the little kitchen porch.

“Why, Sister Mackey! Don’t you love the Squire?”

“Hits this way, Tildy. I’ve lived with Pap so long, I’m *used* t’ him an’ I wouldn’t

swap Pap off for no man on top side of dirt; but I aint in love. I've got mo' sense than that, thank the good Lawd. Serrer Mackey ain't no fool."

"Are the boys and girls catching any fish, Dick?" Sister Brodnax inquired.

"Lots and lots of fish," laughed Tildy's giant as he strode away.

"I measure my love to show you," came in the melody of many voices from adown the creek.

"Go forth and choose your lover" were the words the winds brought from the merry-makers to Sister Mackey's antiquated ears.

"I must see 'bout Sissy," she announced, putting away her knitting.

"Now, Sister Mackey, let the chill'n alone—ef yer go leave us we'll all g' long home," Sister Evans declared.

"Woosh I may drap dead if *I* don't."

"Hope I may never stir if *I* don't."

Sister Mackey had risen, but paused at these protestations.

"You wouldn't spile the whole of this purty day f' us, would you, Sister Mackey?" Sister Beard said, half reproachfully.

"I'd druther t' listen to Sister Mackey norate 'bout Georgy es to eat sweet-cakes!" Sister Evans said, plaintively, "an' to think she won't talk sho gits away with me."

“When I see 'bout Sissy—”

“Oh, let the chill'n 'lone, they're havin' a orful good time; all of 'em been a drappin' cawn ever since the overflow—let 'em alone,” pleaded Sister Amos.

“Well, I'll let 'em 'lone, then,” she at last decided.

“Oh, Lawd; my po' back's killin' me daid. Whar'll I sot?”

“Yes,” spoke Sister Brodnax, “let the children alone in their innocent gaiety, for the time may come when every leaf-whisper will seem a sigh—every wind now so life-giving will some day carry on its wings echoes of sobs and cries of breaking hearts. Sit here, Sister Mackey, and recall your own days of youth and pleasure.”

“You've hurt my feelin's ergin! Oh, my po' ole back's a killin' me!”

“Git her inter Georgy—quick!” and Sister Amos was soon listening to another old-time story and to the gay melodies adown the creek.

QUIEN SABE?

LEAVES FROM VALLOMBROSA.

“**D**ID you come to a satisfactory conclusion concerning your investigations?” asked my friend Dolores, who had been dipping into occult sciences.

“I gave it up quite a while ago.”

“Unconvinced?”

“Oh, I am convinced that there was a deal of deception practiced, at the same time there was much that was *not* deception; but where the unreal left off and the real began, I never knew. What do you think of it?”

“I do not know; indeed, I scarcely dare call my vain imagining thoughts.”

We were silent for a season. Dolores took a book from the table and I made button holes in the baby's aprons.

Except in her quiet presence no one could calculate the stimulating force of her personality; one did as Dolores willed, did her unspoken will involuntarily. I glanced across the table. She was not reading, nor was she restless, for Dolores scorned the existence of nerves.

"What is it, Dolores?"

"There is a woman down town who professes to make photographs—"

"Most photographers do," I laughed.

"Photographs of whatever face you have in your 'mind's eye' at the moment of sitting."

"Of course you believe all that, Dolores?" I asked, mockingly.

"I am not quite sure of anything. 'Nothing is so falacious as facts,' you know."

"Let us try this wonderful woman," I proposed, knowing full well the experiment would be made sooner or later.

"When?"

"Now!" I declared.

"Do you really mean it?" she asked, wistfully.

"Of course I do."

"When?" she asked again.

"Now, Dolores," I repeated.

"I don't know," she said, reflectively.

"Why?"

"You will not make a joke of our going, and laugh at me?"

"I promise not to laugh."

In half an hour Dolores was seated by my side in the photographic reception room.

"I wonder how she looks? Some 'airy fairy Lillian,' I dare say," thinking of the photographer.

As I finished speaking a stout, pleasant-faced woman entered the room.

"You are Madame Z——, who takes—" Dolores paused in embarrassment.

"Spirit photographs, yes;" she answered pleasantly, adding, "are you a believer?"

"I am waiting to be made one," Dolores quietly returned.

"Do I understand aright? You make a picture of a dead-and-gone-face?" I inquired, looking at Dolores and wishing myself at home.

"I understand it this way," Dolores, divining my thoughts, hastened to explain: "You fix your mind upon a loved and lost one, 'think hard,' as the children say, of some particular face and, *presto*, you have his or her picture."

"Exactly," Madame declared.

"'You fix your mind upon a loved and lost one,' so far so good. You positively make a portrait of a face you never knew, of a person—"

"As easily as I make one of your living face, provided you obey instructions," Madame assured me.

"And the face is positively present?"

"Positively present!" She arose and seated herself near me.

"My dear lady," she began earnestly, "the spirit untrammelled by mortality transports itself from one place to another with a rapidity more wonderful than light or electricity.

These are soul-bonds, not of earth, spirit speaks to spirit, never questioning, never doubting, and these spirit-bonds are never broken. There are subtle, mysterious communications between souls—from soul to soul—for indefinitude knows no distance, no space.”

“ ‘Where human hearts grow truly wise,
Where gliding spirits feed the mind
With truth,’ ”

Dolores softly quoted, her sweet face alight with emotion.

“ Ah,” Madame sighed, “ we make too much of the supernatural, of dying, when ’tis nothing to cross the Darien of Death, only a step, so to speak. We are born into celestial life very much as we are ushered into this world, except the soul is more alive, more awake in eternity. We fall asleep here, we awaken there.”

“ Yes,” Dolores said, almost reverently :

“ ‘A land wherein the woeful word
That blinds the thought is never heard ;
But soul with soul holds converse sweet
In language soundless, full, complete.’ ”

“ When we came into this world,” continued Dolores, “ we found ourselves in careful, loving hands. A God who provided for us here will surely not leave us without a loving home-coming there.”

"When we awaken from a beautiful dream," Madame said, smilingly, as she laid her hand on Dolores' arm, "our eyes close again, and we yield ourselves to its pleasantness, broken links of consciousness gradually reunite and reality, panorama-like, unfolds itself and we return to the semi-consciousness of absolute rest. Again we open our eyes, collect our scattered thought, thus realizing a full consciousness of a new day. This is death."

"I can not understand your theory, beautiful though it is. Can you not make it plainer still? Do not, I beg of you, give me a metaphysical answer like a Socrates, nor like a theologian puzzle me with a dogmatic explanation. I attach no value to facts which have not been verified by actual experience. Pardon my candor," I pleaded.

"Then, my dear lady, I shall say no more on this subject, for having never died, I have no 'actual experience.' You want spirit pictures?"

"Whether your doubts will be more clearly developed or entirely swept away," Madame said to Dolores, as she led the way, "depends upon yourselves. I am only an instrument in your hands, so to speak. If you will give the subject your undivided attention for a few seconds the result, I promise you, will not be a disappointment. Sit or stand here," she di-

rected Dolores. "Fix your mind, your thought-power, upon the person you desire photographed. Upon the strength of thought-power depends success. I am only an instrument, as I before stated. Are you ready?"

Dolores sat gazing into vacancy. She was pale but steady.

"That will do."

Dolores arose and started towards me. I caught her in time to save her a fall; for the first time in her life she had fainted. A queer, uncanny feeling came over me as I bathed her face. She soon recovered and asked vaguely:

"Am I dead?"

"Oh, no! only a little bewildered," I said with much bravado, for I knew that my time came next.

"Can I see my picture?" Dolores asked, anxiously, sitting erect and holding to my hand.

"You can see the negative and be convinced," Madame said pleasantly.

"I certainly shall be converted if it depicts the object of my thoughts." Dolores shivered and drew nearer to me.

"Look and be satisfied." Madame extended her hand.

With hungry eagerness Dolores took the plate and gazed rapturously upon it. A deeper palor overspread her face, and tears ran down her cheeks.

"Is the picture satisfactory?" Madame anxiously inquired.

"Perfectly so, thank you."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Quite sure."

Turning to me Dolores shaded the plate, and said chokingly, "See!"

Yes; I saw a very correct negative of Dolores' strong, fine face, and at her back, leaning a little forward, was a clearly-defined picture of a soldier with a superb figure, a handsome, smiling face.

Dolores' eyes still devoured the portrait before her.

"He looks too young," she said at last, "he was several years older than I," still gazing on the well remembered face of long ago.

"Died young," Madame ventured.

"He fell at Gettysurg—so long ago," Dolores sobbed.

"The soul has no age, my dear lady" Madame began; "the soul knows no age. As centuries upon centuries roll on in everlasting succession, the soul feels no trace of years, no change. Suns have no night; death no place. Truth and goodness and beauty are co-eternal. Time exists only for material objects in a material world."

Again a cold blast seemed to sweep over me when I took the chair. I thought of all the ghost stories I had ever heard or read.

"Fix your mind absolutely, profoundly upon the face of some dead relative or friend. You must be serious or we shall fail," Madame said, warningly.

"I feel—scared!" I confessed sheepishly, half arising.

"Not a week ago," Dolores said, hastening to my side, "I heard you say you would give ten years of life for one glimpse of your mother's face."

"So I would, Dolores. I would never feel afraid of mamma."

"Think of her then; think of her absolutely," Madame urged.

I sat still and gave my mind thoroughly to hard thinking, though a regret floated through my brain. A regret that I had undertaken such sacrilegious folly; but, having gone so far, I would not recant.

I intently and lovingly thought of the sweet, fair face of my mother, so long ago covered in the dust of the grave, fixed my mind entirely and profoundly upon her as I saw her last. I can not lucidly describe my feelings, except that a pleasant expectancy took possession of me, and I felt as if I had only to put

out my hand to touch her, so tangible did her presence seem.

“Are you ready?”

How long a time elapsed before I uttered the word I can not say. The pleasant, peaceful feeling swept into oblivion all note of time.

“She is coming,” Dolores whispered.

“Here is your picture, ‘oh, ye of little faith!’” Madame laughed.

I saw a negative of my own face, and close beside it was the beautiful, life-like face of my mother smiling into mine.

“Your mother,” Dolores said, confidently.

“Yes, this is undeniably my mother’s face, Dolores, but—”

“Hush! hush! Your distortion of truth is a new faculty. Don’t cultivate it. Stick to your life-long habit of making the best of every one and of accepting truth without question or suspicion.” Dolores caught my hands and went on excitedly:

“Shaded by a background of suspicion and doubt, that which is innocent amusement can be distorted into mortal temptation, that which might have proven a step into a higher sphere, becomes a plunge into chaotic discontent. Doubt is deadly poison to faith, and a little leaven leaveneth the whole.”

“I do not comprehend,” I insisted. “I can not, do you?” I appealed to Madame.

“Easily enough,” she laughed, “easily enough. Your soul cried out for your mother. Her response was instantaneous. Was a mother’s ears ever shut against her child?”

“I admit that this is her face, but how did it come about? How did mamma—?”

“My dear lady, I can but repeat that I have never died, therefore, have no ‘actual experience.’ The facts are before you. Be content and grateful. You are as wise as I.”



THAT DAY AT SISTER BROADNAX'S.

“**T**HEY SAY,” Sister Mackey observed, when she had lighted her pipe; “they say that Mis’ Key’s got five hundred young chickens, and nair chicken’s got a mammy.”

“Shucks!” ejaculated Sister Amos.

“I wonder!” Sister Broadnax mildly exclaimed.

“That aint a patchin’,” Sister Mackey went on with a sickly, indefinite grin; “thar’s ducks an’ gawslin’s an’ turkeys, too, til yer can’t say hush, an’ nair mammy ’mongst ’em.”

“Tellin’ riddles, Sister Mackey, er jes plain, straight stories?” Sister Amos asked.

“’Taint nair riddle ner lie nuther. Hit’s ther *fac*.”

“Soun’s powerful like,” laughed Sister Amos.

“La, Tildy!”

“Hit’s a pyor *fac*; pap he seed ’em. And pap ’lowed it ’pear’d like the whole arth was alive with leetle yallar an’ black an’ white balls a rollin’ ’roun’.”

“Gre’t King David!”

Sister Broadnax left the room “to see about dinner,” and Sister Evans leaned on the

quilting frames. Sister Amos sewed industriously upon the unfinished "shell" on Sister Mackey's side of the quilt, while that tobacco-loving worm of the earth tilted her chair against the door facing and drew doubtful comfort from a vile little pipe.

"I'll bet," she said, between puffs; "I'll bet a mule 'taint nair one in this house kin tell how Mis' Key hatched them chickens an' gawwlin's an' ducks an' turkey's."

"Under a hen," Sister Amos said, confidently.

"Of course," Sister Evans agreed.

"'Taint so. Mis' Key's got a inkerbuster!"

"A what?"

"I hope I may drap daid ef she ain't got a inkerbuster," Sister Mackey said with emphasis.

"Well," Sister Amos declared, "that do sho get *me*!"

"Tell us all about it, Sister Mackey."

"All I know is that a inkerbuster hatches things same's a pyor hen. Pap he seed 'em."

"Laws-a-massy!"

Sister Evans sat beside Sister Beard, and Sisters Broadnax and Amos were on the other side.

"That's all I know, what pap said; pap's a mighty han' t' tell yarns, an' ef I fergit t'

check him up he tells powerful shaky war tales—tell 'em by the hour. But, a inkerbuster; well, that *do* take the rag off'n th' bush. Hit beats all the war bushwhackin' tales pap ever told, an' that' sayin' a heap, I can tell yer. Ready t' roll that side?"

"Not yit," Sister Beard replied.

"Them jayhawker's tales's the biggest *I* ever heerd; but I seed somethin 'in town las' week that beats that inkerbuster tale all hol-ler."

"What did yer see, Tildy?"

"Thar's pap!" interrupted Sister Mackey. "Ef yer wimmin want to' see a sho nough *man*, jes yer look at pap."

Every one did look and each saw a weazened, insignificant-looking specimen of a Canaanite, with scant, sandy hair sticking up on each side of his bald pate in a comical way, adding to his face a chronic expression of apprehension. His keen, gray eyes darted restlessly about with a hunted look as if something terrible *might* happen at any time. "Pap" had a heart for any fate. A small man with smaller qualifications, and still more minute was his courage; for at times Sister Mackey's wrath was overwhelming and quite prodigious; indeed, sufficiently overpowering to keep several larger men than "pap" apprehensive.

"What's wantin', Pap? What's yer quit plowin' an' come over here fer? Say, Pap?"

Sister Mackey's rasping voice yelled from the door.

"Pap" coughed, wiped his face with his sleeve, and bolstering up his fast-waning courage, squeaked out, "Smoke'ouse key."

"Lawd-a-massy! I ain't got it, yes—no—yes, here it is in my pocket—I'll be doggoned!"

"Pap's a sweet lookin' cuss," Sister Amos whispered when Sister Mackey walked to the gate to deliver the keys.

"La, Tildy! how you do run on!"

"Got him well trained, no mistake 'bout that."

"Who's well trained, Tildy?" Sister Mackey asked, looking over her spectacles and taking a seat.

"'Square Mackey, for one," well-knowing her desire to be considered the "best man of the two."

"Hit's a pity Dick Amos ain't es good."

"He's better," declared Sister Amos. "Ain't he, Sister Broadnax?"

"Dick suits you better," Sister Broadnax replied with her usual policy.

"Do yer recurlect, Tildy, how I squelched Dick that time yer was sick?"

Sister Amos did not remember.

"Well," began Sister Mackey, "oncte when Tildy was orful sick, me an' Sis Peters was thar, an' we's so plum' frustrated 'bout Tildy

that little Tommy fell out'n ther do' 'fore we knowd it. Sis had milked the cows an' turned 'em out, an' 'bout that time I called her an' she clean fergot t' put up ther bars, so the calves jes walked out an' was a gwine t' ther swamps with ther cows when Dick he come an' drive 'm back. Dick he was sho mad, an' when he come in the house, 'fore he axes 'bout Tildy, mind yer, he sees that bump on Tom's haid. Well, sir, he was *good* mad then, an' axes 'What's ther matter with ther boy's haid?' 'Dick,' I says, sollem as a preacher. 'Tildy she kicked Tom down ther steps.' 'What? Tildy cain't move,' says Dick. 'Who turned them caives out?' 'Tildy turned them caives out jes f' pyor devilment,' I says es sollem as yer please. Dick Amos never said a word an' just sot thar by Tildy an' give medicin' all night meeker'n ole Moses hisse'f. That's ther way t' manage a man, jes bluff 'em. Hit jes nachully takes a Georgy 'oman t' do it, too," Sister Mackey said, boastfully.

"Ain't yer skeered the Squar'll get tired o' bein' bluffed?"

"Na-a-w," Sister Mackey scornfully replied, "Pap ain't got no spunk—nair speck, ef he ever did have a bit hit's gone."

Innate refinement is not easily coarsened, and while intimate association with a fussy, fretful, coarse woman like Sister Mackey did

not elevate her kind neighbors, it certainly did not drag them down into her commonplace strata; nor could they hoist her into a higher sphere; for, though vulgarity of birth may be modified, it can never be eradicated by association with education or refinement.

"Do you call this ther Lone Stair o' Texas?" Sister Mackey asked when they had "rolled" the quilt on both sides. "I seed a pow'ful purty quilt up t' Holly Springs, red an' green, they called that ther Lone Stair o' Texas, an' yer bet hit was purty, too—jes one big stair in ther middle—'pear like hit jest nachully growed plum out t' ther cawnders 'n' aiges; hit was a plum sight. Ther gals made kroshay trimmin' and sewed hit on the aige. Lawd a massy! hit was a sight to see—so purty!"

"I ain't a studyin' no quilts. I'm thinkin' 'bout that—that—what's that new sort o' hen that hatches so many chickens without aigs? What is it, Sister Mackey?" Sister Amos asked. That ancient dame took her pipe from her lips and gazed in withering scorn upon Sister Amos.

"Tildy Amos! Yer a mother of four children—threedaid an' Tom a livin,' an' axin' sich foollyfied questions! I don't see nothin' t' laugh at," glancing around the room in reproof.

Silence fell upon the little company. Each felt a vague dread of Sister Mackey's reckless tongue, and as that accrimonious soul lighted her pipe anew each feared a revelation, and each mentally vowed to discourage all such communication as Sister's Mackey's soul loved to impart. She resumed her chair near the door, gazing out on the fields beyond. That same sickly grin—the danger signal—gradually stole over her weather-beaten face—a smile of pain or pleasure, none could tell. For a moment she held her nasty pipe at arm's length and turned her face towards her friends who were industriously quilting. "I heerd a lot mo' 'bout that orful—"

"Gracious!" exclaimed Sister Evans.

"Lordy!" from Sister Amos.

"What's the matter? Ef yer ain't keerful yer *will* stick yerse'ves rale bad,?" Sister Beard said. I thought you knew we were rolling this side.

"Gracious goodness!"

Sister Amos examined Sister Evans' finger, whispering softly, "Better git her into Georgy, quick."

"Ef jes' a-stickin' yer finger hurts so bad, what yer 'spose a bone felon is? Sister Mackey, did you ever see a bone felon?"

"Yes, I've seed many a one. I know'd ole Brother Bowers in Georgy; he had two at onct."

"Safe," whispered Sister Amos.

"Yes, sir; Brother Bowers had a orful spell. He lived 'twix pap's an' the creek. My pappy was a pow'ful friendly man, so sociable-like, yer know. Well, pappy heerd 'bout Brother Bowerses bad luck, an' he rid over to see 'bout it. Sister Bowers was a mighty still sort o' 'oman, and Brother Bowers was jes' the tother way; but ever sence he'd got them fellums on hands Sister Bowers was a-gittin' tollerble spunky an' innerpen'ent."

The vague little grin grew sicker and more indefinite.

"What did he do for it?" Sister Broadnax inquired, anxiously hoping to keep her thoughts lingering in "Georgy."

"Well, it would be easier t' tell what he didn't do, fer ever'body what passed told him exactly how t' kyor them fingers, an' like a ole fool he tried ever' blessed thing." The grin spread into a smirk—then faded away to come back again most exasperatingly uncertain than before. "One mawnin' pappy went by thar an' ole Brother Bowers was a walkin' ther yard a holdin' up both them fullum fingers an' a howlin' an' a cussin'."

"An' him a church member an' a per-fesser?" cried Sister Evans in amazement.

"Huh! Brother Bowers was a Metherdish! *They* don't mind a little cussin' onct in a while

—no mor'n a Baptis' minds a little whisky f' big meetin' times. Pappy he rid up to' ther fence an' hollered, but Brother Bowers jes' kep' on a cussin' an' a hollerin' 'bout them fel-lums a-hurtin', when one o' them childurn—thar's mor'n yer could count with a jography—run out t'ther fence an' Brother Bowers whirled in kickin' like a mule, an' laid that young'un low — kicked him sky-west and crooked, an' Lawd! how he yelled f' his mammy! Well, yer bet she come, too, an' that orful quick. She shuck both her fistes in Brother Bowers' face, an' dar'd him t' try that ergin." A faint, far-away chuckle advertised Sister Mackey's enjoyment in the reminiscence of the good old times.

"Yes, sir," she continued with much gusto; "pappy jes' sot thar on his mule an' watched 'em—pappy was a mighty sociable old feller, an' was everlastin'ly mixed inter somebody's fusses, an' he jes' sot thar an' enjoyed ther row. Brother Bowers flung his hat at Sister Bowers, an' cussed ther tops off'n ther trees. Then pappy says: 'Brother Bowers, is yer tried ashes an' hot water—bilin' hot?' but ther ole man jes' kep' a walkin' an' a cussin', an' pappy says: 'Lemme see yer fingers, Brother Bowers.' Then he stops an' takes off ther rag, an' pappy 'lowed he never seed sich a sight in all *his* borned days, an' he gwine on

sixty. Well, the old 'oman steps up an' says : 'Lemme see ;' then she ketch a-holt of' them two swelled up fingers an' give 'em a twis' an' squoze 'em, an' then a twis' ergin, jes' like she's a-wringin' a chicken's haid off, an' danced 'roun' an' hollered : 'I'm even with ole Brother Bowers at las', thank ther Lawd !''

"La, me !" Sister Beard shivered.

"I'd a killed her !" Sister Evans declared, stabbing the "lone stair" with her needle.

"Sich a onhuman woman. I don't like t' study 'bout her." Sister Amos pushed her chair back from the frame and stared at Sister Mackey.

"Poor man !" Sister Broadnax said pityingly.

"Hit kyored Brother Bowers all ther same—best doste o' medercin' he ever tuck," Sister Mackey said, waving her knitting excitedly ; "jes' what he needed, for when them fingers got well he never *did* sass Sister Bowers no mo'—he was a plum good feller. I tell yer, ther men is too *biggitty* ; they've got to be *tuck down somehow*, an' it jes' nachelly takes a *Georgy 'oman* t' to top ther cotton onct in a while. Yer never seed a Georgy 'oman run over an' cow'd by no man ! ther cymlin-headed gumps ! *I never was* sorry for Brother Bowers," she concluded with a chuckle.

"Yes., *sir* ;" after a pause and re-lighting her pipe ; "that sho did settle Brother Bowers

in no ways'n one, f' he was a backslidin' Meth-
erdis', and atter that mawnin' he was a mourner
in the fus' meetin' at the crosst-roads meetin'-
house, an' he come tho'o in a hour or so. Then
he jin'd the Baptis' at Rock Springs, an' always
kep' his r'ligion. Baptis' ain't nigh es tricky in
losin' ther r'ligious p'nts es ther Meth-erdis' is,
no how. Yes, *sir*, that bone fellum scrape holp
Brother Bowers pow'ful."

Sister Broadnax raised her level Methodist
head, and smiled indulgently. She pitied Sis-
ter Mackey from the depth of her honest heart.

Much would be added to the world if peo-
ple would think to pity—remember, as did Sis-
ter Broadnax, the small amenities, the little
courtesies that each are due the other in every
relation of life. On the other hand, Sister
Mackey believed as strongly in "speaking her
mind," regardless of whom her rough expres-
sions wounded.

"Sister Bowers," continued Sister Mackey,
"was a Cammerlite, an' show'd her faith by
her works, a-twistin' bone-fellum fingers."

Sister Amos stood back of the grim nar-
rator. She "made a face" and winked good-
naturedly, for away down in her "Cammerlite"
heart rested, in love and peace, only best inten-
tions and good will towards all Caanan.

"Well," Sister Evans said, with a sigh of
relief, when she had finished her last shell,
"we've been right smart. The quilt's done,
Sister Broadnax."

"And I thank you all so much, too."

"I'm thinkin' 'bout that orful Sister Bowers." Sister Amos laughed.

"Sister Mackey tells interestin' things," Sister Evans remarked. "That inkerbuster tuck my eye, but Sister Bowers takes the cake."

"Is she daid, Sister Mackey?"

"Not es I knows. She's a fine 'oman. Georgy wimmin is all got grit. I ain't never yit seed one as would let a man boss her. Yes, *sir*, they've got backbone an' plenty of sand. It does me good to see 'em top ther cotton f' ther uppity, biggitty men. Georgy wimmin is jes' what's got ther grit to' do it."

"I b'leeve yer," Sister Amos assured her, "I've seed one Georgy woman."

"Don't yer see how I've got Pap under?" with a triumphant flourish of the blue-and-white sock.

"I do, fer a fac'. Po' ole 'Square!"

"It tuck me an' my maw a level year to' git ther sass out'n pap; but we done it. Yes, *sir*, we done it. Pap's bette'n ole Moses hissef' now!"

"La, me!" sighed Sister Beard.

"Yes, *sir*, ole Moses cain't hol' a candle t' pap f' meekernis—nair candle!"

Again the half-finished sock did duty as a battle flag, as Sister Amos declared fervently, "Don't you forgit it. We *all* b'leeve yer!"

THE WOMAN IN THE TEA GOWN.

[A LEAF FROM VALLOMBROSA.]

THE MOONLIGHT filtered in arabesque patterns through the moss festooned oaks, making picturesque little patches of light here and there, and over yonder, where the rose vines climbed socially into the great magnolias, the shadows were darker by contrast.

Down by the south gate, where the pink and white oleanders kissed each other over the rose hedge, stood the woman in the tea-gown.

None of us knew her—only as the woman in the tea-gown.

When the first rays of the morning sun glorified the restless, noisy surf as it came glinting and sparkling further and nearer up the beach, the woman in the tea-gown gazed expectantly far a-sea. We were all sorry for her, as women will feel sorry for each other, but as yet none of us had dared cross the barrier of reserve with which she hedged herself about. She was silent, faded and gray. She had no friends, no visitors, and our hearts ached with and for her; for a more desolate creature we had never seen.

Even the postman's ring never caused an emotion of joy or sorrow with her, though the other ten of Mrs. Hill's lady boarders were in a flutter of expectancy when the mail was being distributed during the morning meal.

The woman in the tea-gown slowly retired from the dining-room with her tired, listless step, and was not among us until the bell again summoned us to the table. If addressed, she answered slowly and quietly, glancing at her interlocutor with a steady look of her great black eyes, and then looked down upon her plate, conveying the idea plainer than words could have spoken, that politeness alone induced her reply. She wandered alone, always alone, up and down the rose hedge or on the beach, mysteriously silent, distressingly anxious.

"That poor woman has a terrible heart-ache. It's killing her," said good Mrs. Hill, as the woman in the tea-gown stood on the beach one morning.

The white-winged sea gulls were sailing between the sea and sky, and now and then one would splash into the water for its morning bath far beyond the breakers.

"Who is she, anyway?" asked a visitor.

"A sorrowing woman; that is all I can tell you," Mrs. Hill replied.

Weeks lengthened into months and still, grave, faded, with her sombre gowns and listless footsteps, the woman in the tea-gown lived in our midst as unknown as if she had worn an iron mask and spoken a different language.

Gradually the interest in her died away. The lady boarders left off wondering about her, for she just stayed at the same point, neither lessening nor increasing her self-concentrated manner; so sadly and wearily her days stretched along in their unbroken calm and unwavering reserve.

I had not given her up; I never give up an object of interest or pity. She was still to me a thoughtful subject. Whether because I was more pertinacious than others, or because being in the next room I seemed nearer to her, and could hear her walking up and down, up and down her room for hours, not restlessly, but with a solemn, continuous march which often lasted till the gray morning light glimmered through my windows. Whether this made a bond between us unfelt by others, I do not know; but certain it is, that long after the others had lost interest in her, I watched for an opportunity to break the terrible reserve which shut me out from her ideas, sentiments and sorrows. I felt sure that a talk and a cry with me would do us both good.

After her sleepless, restless nights she would appear at the breakfast table with the

same haggard look in her eyes, the same patient, pitiful face and hopeless manner.

One night I was writing letters in my room when a sob, deep and heart-breaking, came to me from the next room.

It was irresistible. I could stand no more. Hastily putting aside my letter, I went into the hall. A light shone from the transom above her door. All was still except from the parlor stairs came a quartet of voices singing "Home, Sweet Home."

Again that awful sobbing as if a pent-up agony, like a mighty river bursting its bounds rushed distractedly, sweepingly into sound and action. Tears and sobs falling in mad sorrow and then a fall.

"Come!" I called to the landlady, as she crossed the hall.

"What is it?"

"The woman in the tea-gown," I answered.

"You open the door," I suggested.

"No; you know her, I do not."

I felt the impropriety of the intrusion, but as another sob reached my ears, I softly opened the door, influenced by a sympathy stronger than conventionalities. There upon the floor lay the woman in the tea-gown; her long, abundant white hair in silvery confusion over her shoulders, her face buried in her arms, gathered in a reckless heap, writhing in help-

ess misery. In front of her, leaning against the wall, was a full length portrait of a beautiful woman, so brilliantly and extravagantly beautiful that I wondered as I gazed upon it if lips so perfect and eyes so wickedly bright could ever have existed. The dress was of the fashion of twenty years ago. By the light of a lamp I looked upon the portrait, then at the woman in the tea-gown weeping at its feet, the antipodes of life, yet, in the lofty, petulant dignity of the one, I could trace a vague resemblance to the lowly grief of the other.

Had these melancholy eyes, so veiled by sorrow, ever resembled those insolently beautiful eyes of the picture?

Was it Magdalen weeping before her former self?

The more I looked the more I thought.

“ ‘Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these,’ ” quoted good Mrs. Hill in a whisper.

“Let’s go,” I nodded toward the door.

In spite of our years and knowledge of the world, Mrs. Hill and I reproached ourselves and each other as we wiped our eyes in the seclusion of my room, for not having said or done something to comfort the suffering creature in the next room.

We heard her sobs exhaust themselves at last, then came the heavy, measured footfalls. Her door opened quickly. We were in the hall

in a moment. The woman in the tea-gown glanced about her, then ran down the stairs.

"Let's follow her, poor creature!" Mrs. Hill hastily whispered.

Once out of doors, the woman walked up and down the rose hedge, then out of the gate and down upon the beach, moaning and wringing her hands.

We stood in the shadows of the oleanders, watching every movement.

Suddenly, throwing her shawl over her head, she started up the street.

"I know the town perfectly; we will follow her, poor woman."

Together we went up one quiet street, down another, keeping the woman in the tea-gown in view, being no easy matter, as she no longer walked as if shod with lead.

She stopped at last before a grand old house, brilliantly lighted as if for some festive occasion. She stood a moment looking up longingly at the crowds of people going in; then turning the corner, she found a back gate, opened it and went in; we followed close behind her.

She stopped at last, almost in the glare of the lighted parlors, and screening her presence in the shadows of the dense shrubbery, she hungrily watched and waited.

The night was warm, yet she shivered. When looking up again, she saw in the center of the room a bridal party.

"My baby-love," she whispered, shrinking back. "My pretty baby Maude."

The bride was very young, fair and sweet-looking in her laces and orange-blossoms. A stout, elderly man, with an obstinate, unpleasant expression, stood on the left of the bride.

"Her father, the devil's own," my landlady whispered from behind our tree.

He glanced suspiciously around, twice coming to the windows and gazing into the semi-darkness of the shadowed shrubbery. The woman in the tea-gown crouched lower and stared with painful intensity upon the scene within.

The rustling of skirts and silent attention of the assembly as they arose, a soft fluttering of fans and subdued whispers, a sigh and a smile, then a breathless silence.

The ceremony was proceeding smoothly, when came the warning, "If any man can show just cause why these may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak or hereafter hold his peace."

"I forbid the sacrifice!" shouted the woman in the tea-gown. It rang out clearly through the grounds. It echoed from room to room in that grand old house.

All was confusion, then came a momentary hush. Some one leaped from the windows, and all was hurry and pursuit.

Mrs. Hill, with eager step, was at her side speaking in low tones to the woman in the tea-gown.

"No, no!" she cried, "my little one shall not be sacrificed. My baby Maude!" she wailed.

"Come with me, Edith. I know you now. Come dear," pleaded Mrs. Hill.

Breaking away from us the woman in the tea-gown walked boldly to the open window.

I looked up. A vision of youth and loveliness was framed there in ivy, toward which the woman in the tea-gown hastened.

"Maude!" she whispered, holding out both hands, such wasted little hands, to her.

"Are you my mother?" the girl asked, wistfully bending nearer.

"Maude, this is your mother. Come, if you would save her," Mrs. Hill urged.

The girl glanced around at the deserted parlors and whispered cautiously, "I will meet you at the back gate in a moment. Be quick; they will all be back again."

The stars twinkled restlessly above our heads with a feverish, uncertain gloom, it seemed to me. There was no calm anywhere.

While we waited outside the gate, the noise and confusion from the house again reached us.

"Maude! Where is Maude?" we heard again and again.

The gate opened softly and Maude was in her mother's arms.

We stole silently along a quiet street, mother and daughter walking rapidly in front until we reached the white sands of the deserted beach. Then we four slowly strolled to our own gate under the oleanders.

"Like an apple-blossom, isn't she?" asked the woman in the tea-gown, when we were all safe up-stairs again, and she held her darling close to her poor tired heart.

"I am sure her heart is as fresh and pure as her face, too," Mrs. Hill cried, with tears of joy.

Then we left them together.

"I know the whole story from beginning to end. Edith Dalton was a beauty and a belle when she married that horrid Spaniard, La Riva, whom you saw to-night. She was married just where Maude stood in bridal array. They went abroad, and for years I heard nothing of them. In the meantime Edith's father died, and she, being his only child, inherited his wealth. After several years came a report of Edith's death. I did not know until to-night that La Riva was in the city."

"Do you think they are safe, will he not search for Maude?" I asked.

"I dare say he will. We must manage to outwit him if possible. Good night."

I sat, listening to the murmuring of voices in the next room, until all was quiet.

I was late getting to breakfast the next morning, but the woman in the tea-gown had not yet appeared with her "apple-blossom."

Noon came, and still they had not come out. Mrs. Hill knocked timidly and the door was opened by pretty Maude.

"Mamma is sleeping," she whispered.

"Come out, honey, so you will not disturb her, and get acquainted with us," Mrs. Hill suggested.

Gently closing the door, the girl with Mrs. Hill came into my room.

"I am so happy to find mamma," she began. "You don't know how I have hungered and prayed for mamma, though my father told me she was wicked and had deserted us, I could never believe it. Mamma has spent all these years in an insane asylum, placed there by her husband. Was it not a miracle she found me last night? Was it not good of God? Mamma says she has watched and waited and prayed for her ship to come in, hoped against hope for me, her baby Maude."

"But your marriage, Maude?" Mrs. Hill asked.

"I have seen my would-be bridegroom once—last night—and hope never to see him again. I must thank you," turning to me, "for wanting to be good to mamma. She says you *looked* sorry for her all the time, though she forbore to trouble anyone with her chapter of woes. I am so glad to find her portrait, too, and never knew before what became of it. It was sent to the asylum to her. I must see if she is awake," and the child went swiftly though silently into the next room. A moment later she was back again.

"She sleeps from exhaustion, poor, darling mamma."

"My dear little girl," I ventured, "if you do not care for the man you came so near marrying last evening, why did you consent at all?"

"My dear lady, you do not know my father or you would not ask such a question. It would be worth my liberty to oppose him. I am desperately afraid of him; indeed, fear is the only feeling I have for him," the child confessed, with a shudder.

Maude ate her dinner in my room, so fearful of discovery was Mrs. Hill. Then she went back to her mother.

"I feel badly when I remember what I thought of the woman in the tea-gown last night," I confessed to my landlady.

"Ah, my dear, we can not help thinking. I thought this morning of what George Eliot said: 'When death, the great reconciler, has come, it is never our tenderness we repent of, but our severity.' We are but mortal and—"

"Maude's white face startled us.

"Come!" she cried.

A smile of ineffable sweetness lighted the cold, dead face of the woman in the tea-gown. Every trace of suffering, every line of care, was smoothed out, and in death's eternal sleep she rested.

Her ship had at last come in, and she had sailed away on peaceful waters.



BROKEN IDOLS.

WHEN PEOPLE have passed the half-way house on life's journey, their minds unconsciously drift into the past. Old memories, oft times unbidden, crowd upon each other, then singly one takes up the thread of recollection, and as individuals one dissects, so to speak, each period of life. Childhood, with its careless irresponsibilities, its ever happy day, stands in every life a distinct factor.

The period which reaches from girlhood to middle age, though fraught with so many varieties of experiences and associations, the character of every individual in whom we were interested is yet vivid and real.

We recall every school friend and neighbor who are numbered among the loved of long ago.

To-night the memory of my room-mate, Lina Gray, comes almost tangibly before me. For four years we were inseparable companions; then came the parting—she going East, I to my home in the West.

After years of silence, a letter came from Lina Gray Elsworth, inviting me to visit her in her Florida home.

Twilight was closing in when, travel-worn and weary, I reached the town in which she lived, and through the gloaming I caught a glimpse of lovely surroundings of bush and dell and dingle.

I had wondered why Lina had not married Ned Talbot, her long-ago lover, and still thought of it when the carriage stopped.

It was a lovely October evening. The air was heavy with the odor of many flowers, which grew in luxuriant profusion, and predominant came the perfume of Lina's old favorite, the Grand Duke jasmine.

I saw that it grew everywhere in beds on either side of the broad walk, in marble vases each side of the steps, everywhere lingered that intangible, haunting fragrance.

How we met I scarcely know ; but neither spoke. Such long, sad years lay between our parting in the dear old Alma Mater and our meeting now ! "It is you, my ugly duckling," she at last half sobbed, recalling the old pet name.

The familiar voice, but so plaintive, the utterance so low and clear, broke the sealed fountain. I clasped her in my arms and wept.

"Don't, honey," she whispered ; "it's all over now. We will let the 'dead past bury its dead' and once more be happy school girls on a vacation."

"You were not—"

"No, dear," she quietly said, following my thoughts into the past.

"It is God's will that we should suffer, the sin lies in bemoaning broken idols."

A shadow crossed her face and her words fell upon my heart like a sudden conviction. She saw it and said :

"Come, I want you to see your room. It is ready for you, though I did not expect you until to-morrow. Your last letter said 'look for me when you see me.' It was so like you that I smiled over it. This is my ugly duckling's room. I selected it because it is the pleasantest and most convenient, to my sitting room. See, it opens into my sanctum, and you will never feel lonely."

It was a dainty apartment—long and broad. All its appointments were as only Lina, with her exquisite taste, could have chosen. The delicately-tinted walls, the gossamer lace which gracefully draped the windows, even the rose-colored lamp which threw its softened light over all, attested that rare refinement and delicacy of taste which was an essential attribute of her character.

Lina had been "born to the purple," I knew, but I had as yet had so little opportunity of judging of her present circumstances, that I looked about me with undisguised interest and curiosity. Lina smiled.

"Yes, my ugly duckling," she answered my thoughts, "I have all that I desire and more than I deserve."

"And your husband, Lina?" with the freedom of old time.

"Is a noble, estimable man. I am, indeed, blessed."

Her tones satisfied me, though her words did not.

"Dr. Elsworth is good and true—a grand, noble man," she went on. "I am sorry he is away, but urgent business demanded his attention. He will return tomorrow evening. You will like my husband, honey. I remember that you expected so much of a 'genuine man.' I am sure you will like Dr. Elsworth," she confidently said; and I did.

We had ample and uninterrupted time for reviewing the years which had elapsed since we parted.

Only one subject was tacitly avoided. Once or twice some chance expression seemed to approach the forbidden topic, and I saw her wince and shrink back unconsciously. My own sorrows were still too fresh for me not to feel intuitively that she too had suffered.

The next day I met Dr. Elsworth. He was twice Lina's age, tall, grave and dignified.

I glanced involuntarily toward them as they stood side by side. She in all her elegant

grace, dressed in a gown of soft heliotrope with the waxen green leaves of the jasmine she wore at her throat, lying against its ivory palor, and a thrill of disappointment rushed through me. A vision of Ned Talbot, the old-time lover, arose before me. Ned Talbot, with his handsome, boyish face bending over hers in such unutterable tenderness.

Had she forgotten?

I had learned so many bitter lessons in human falsehood that I had almost come to believe in nothing. Lina was my one remaining faith.

Was she, too, like the rest?

It was twilight, when, going into the parlor, I caught a glimpse of Lina's white dress, as she sat at the piano softly playing. She did not see me. The old, old song filled the room with its wailing, and ended in a little sob. Again she sang. Her voice was thick with tears as she sang *Infelice*, and my heart ached with and for her as I listened.

When Dr. Elsworth came in and coaxed her out on the veranda, I thought of a surety that Lina was indeed blest.

The pleasant days sped on, as happy times go all too rapidly, and Lina was still so wrapped in her invulnerable mantle of dignity, that I strove in vain to read her heart.

We recalled, one rainy day, that summer so long ago which she had spent with me in

my western paradise, and Lina smilingly quoted from Mrs. Baer's "Summer Idyl."

"Quiver of heat o'er the meadow's breast,
Glimmer of gold where the reapers rest,
The drooping leaves hang breathlessly;
Vaporous clouds in the azure blue,
Radiant light where the sun shines through,
The silver stream flows noiselessly."

"Go on, Lina," I said, looking around for a fan. "I can see it all—the willows, the river and all. Go on, dear."

"Stir of the wind in the quickened leaves,
Billows of gold in the unbound sheaves—
The rippling rill moves restlessly;
Dash of the rain in reapers' eyes,
Lo! with the rainbow across the skies,
Our thoughts melt into eternity.'"

"Ah," I breathed, "that summer-time so long ago," the summer preceding our parting at school, and I remembered that Lina's capacity for an all-absorbing affection, unselfish and unstinted, was to her nature's most lavish gift. I now felt that it had also been the bane of her life. One evening after the guests had all departed, I sat alone in my room.

A faint light stole from under the door leading to Lina's sanctum. I knew she was writing and waited, hoping she would call me. I waited in vain.

At last with the familiarity of a sister, I rapped, opened the door and entered.

Lina turned and said quickly :

“‘Her hopes are dead, yet through the starless night
She watches for their ghosts—so silent and so white.’”

“You look like a ghost, ‘so silent and so white’ yourself, Lina dear. Come, lie down.”

“My ugly duckling,” she sighed, when she had obeyed.

“Your same ugly duckling,” I tried to laugh, as I knelt beside her and felt her hand upon my hair.

“Turn off the lamp, honey. I want to talk. Dr. Elsworth will not be home until one o’clock. I always wait for him, you know.”

“Now,” she said, when we had only the moon-lighted windows. “My good, faithful duckling! Do you still believe in me, honey?” she asked in her old-time way.

“Lina, I can not understand you; I can not,” I said, honestly if bluntly.

“I have intended ever since you came to ‘fess,’ as we used to say at school. Indeed, that feeling was prime mover in my invitation to you to come to me, honey.”

I waited. Her hand still smoothed my hair.

“Of course you remember Ned Talbot?”

Ah, did I not?

“I will tell you the sequel to that sweet summer idyl of so long ago. Once only has it ever passed my lips. I confided my past to Dr. Elsworth, before our marriage.”

"I'm so glad you did," I said.

"I hastened home from school to prepare for my marriage. You remember Ned was with me. When we reached the junction a lady dressed in deepest mourning, with her veil closely drawn, entered the coach and took a seat just back of us. She evidently shrank from notice, but from under her veil of crepe she scrutinized me, and then leaning her head against the window, seemed lost in thought.

"Ned Talbot was in his gayest mood."

Lina paused. The hand upon my head trembled nervously.

"There, there, honey," I said, "don't tell any more."

"Yes, I will finish. What is it Mrs. Baer says in 'Sacrifice?'"

" 'My heart no more shall rise
Above the drifts;
A summer's sacrifice,
O'er which snow drifts.' "

I softly quoted.

"Beautiful, isn't it? Where did I leave off? It was quite dark when we reached home. Ned left me in the waiting-room and went to find our carriage.

"I sat there thinking of how charmed my aunt would be with Ned, '*my* Ned.' I was whispering to my heart, when I looked up, and saw the lady I had noticed on the cars standing before me.

"She threw back her veil, and I thought I had never seen so sweet and fair a face—a face like an apple-blossom. You remember little Blossie Wharton? *She* was even prettier than Blossie. Her voice was unnaturally steady, as if forced to do her will. She made no preliminary remark, no excuses, but simply said to me:

"‘Are you engaged to marry *him*?’ with a slight gesture towards the door.

"‘I am’ something impelled me to reply, in the same spirit. I saw she was desperately in earnest.

"‘May the Lord help you, poor child! you have committed your fate to a heartless, perjured man.’

"I was bewildered, and looked at her helplessly.

"‘You are so young, too—younger than I; your face is strong with character—bright with beauty. It is fearful to know the truth; truth is often as cruel as death,’ she went on unfalteringly.

"‘God knows I pity you—such a hideous fate; but it is mine too, and I did not deserve it any more than you.’

"She paused a moment, then thrust a letter into my hand.

"‘Take it,’ she whispered, ‘I have kept it two years, and each cruel word has burned itself into both heart and brain. Learn from

them now before it is too late. Poor child,' she said with infinite tenderness.

"'It is a hard and bitter lesson, but we must all learn it sometime. God bless you and make you perfect through suffering!' She stooped and kissed my forehead and walked away into the darkness.

"I sat holding the letter tightly in my hand—the only tangible proof that all was not a hideous nightmare.

"I read the worn, tear-stained letter many times before I slept. 'Ned Talbot had written it.'

"My thoughts came and went. Lina was silent. The clock above her desk chimed the hour of twelve; her arm still held me.

"It was a wicked, heartless letter, and Ned Talbot had written it to the woman who gave it to me. The letter said, without a word of regret, that he had been mistaken in the nature of his feelings towards her, and begged a release from the engagement between them. He thought it only honorable that she should not be left in doubt regarding his intentions toward her.

"'A man who finds himself mistaken should certainly rectify that mistake. If a man promises to marry a woman, and finds that promise a burden instead of a joy, he would irreparably wrong both the woman and

himself by keeping it. It would be far kinder, much more honorable to acknowledge the error and beg forgiveness. A womanly woman would be grateful for such an escape,' I declared with much fervor.

"Ah, my ugly duckling! What is harder to bear than proofs of treachery in those we love? In that letter he spoke slightly, even disrespectfully of me, of my 'school-girl sentimentality'—my 'disgusting letters of love.' I need not tell you of that long, awful night. I sat there as one bereft of reason—my idol shattered at my feet, its truth and purity forever gone! Ah, my darling, there's no such thing as mending a broken faith.

"When Ned Talbot called the next day I sent the letter down to him asking to be excused. I never saw the face of my lover again.

"That is all. I had loved him so entirely, and though my faith in him was slain I could not in a few brief hours overcome the affection I had for years lavished upon him.

"When he had gone I thought life had lost all of its brightness, and for years lived in the shadow of that sorrow. 'Do you remember that little verse dear Miss Sarah Bradley was so fond of quoting to the girls? Repeat them, honey.'

" ' 'Tis not the lover which is lost,
The love for which we grieve,
It is the *price* which they have cost,
The memories they leave.'

"Thank you. Sometimes I recall the beautiful romance that filled my life for four years and have often lived it over again. Then I open that book wherein I recorded my marriage vows to one who is truth and honor itself—whose slightest word is sacred, and I close the book and reverently repeat :

" 'Ah, what am I, that God hath saved
Me from the doom I did desire,
And crossed the lot myself had craved
To set me higher.' "

She fell again into silence.

The moon shone on her sad, white face, and a tear glistened upon her cheek.

"Dear ugly duckling I have something to show you."

"Never mind now."

"Yes. Good night, dear faithful heart," she said, putting into my hands a tiny casket.

"Good night, Lina, dear," I answered, going into my room.

The little casket held a photograph of a smiling, boyish face—the face so many had loved ; a spray of Grand Duke jasmine, with its ghost of a perfume, and a clipping from a newspaper, which read :

"TALBOT. — At his home in this city,
EDWIN K. TALBOT, aged 26 years.

RATTLESNAKE OIL.

“**H**OW f’urn a fo’n—da—shi—on,
Ye sents ob de Lawd,
Is laid fer yer faif
In His expellant wo’d.
What mo—”

The song in Aunt Glory Ann’s high soprano was cut short; her next words were:

“Dullawdy mussy!”

She had almost set her bare feet upon a rustling snake, and a sleek little lizzard darted from a heap of dead leaves near her.

“Dullawdy! dullawdy mussy!”

A glorious expanse of wood and dell and dingle in the bend of the creek surrounded Aunt Glory Ann as she stood with uplifted stick.

Around her the bushes and undergrowth shone white with freshly-washed clothes, and the water in the great, black wash-pot bubbled and sizzled with the heat of burning brush around it.

“Dullawdy mussy! How kum yer peruse roun’ dis way to fool ’long o’ me? Say, yer ongodly sarpyant?”

The snake lifted a defiant head and thrust out a challenging tongue.

“‘Part, ’part dese coa’s, I say! I ain’t nair fool. I tells yer same’s de preacher tell *me*, ’part dese coa’s, now yer heern *me*!”

Only a darting tongue and a hiss was the answer.

“Ah, ha! gwine t’ be uppish an’ sassy is yer? I ’spec I hafter brooze yer haid wid dis battlin’ stick an’ den sot my heel on yer ole long naik, ’cordin’ t’ Sent Jeemeses’ skripter.”

The stick missed its aim, and after a rapid wriggle through the grass the snake again reared its head and hissed defiantly.

“I heern yer, Mr. Snake, an’ I lay I kills yer likewise.”

Wiping her hands dry, Aunt Glory Ann again rallied to the attack.

“Dar now!” She had laid him low with a worse than bruised head. “How is yer copperosity now? Is yer feelin’ pyeart an’ sassified wid yer hissin’ an’ spittin’ an’ sassin’? An’ I sho’ gwine hang yer daid body up in a saplin’ an’ bre’k up dis dry spell—caze hit’s a sho’ sign o’ rain t’ see a snake in a tree.”

After much effort and many exclamations the snake was at last lodged among the lower branches of a tree, but it writhed and wriggled and fell in a heap on the grass.

“Dullawdy mussy! here yer is, is yer? Come atter more hick’ry tea?”

The stick came down in repeated blows, and the snake was again hoisted among the leaves.

“*Now* I got yer—ain’t got no mo’ haid dan a rock. I sho’ brooze *dat* sarpyant’s haid. Who dat? Dullawdy mussy!”

“I’se boun’ f’ de promus la—a—a—n’
I’se boun’ f’ de promus lan’,
Oh, who will come an’ go wid me?
I’se boun’ f’ de promus lan’.”

The song came like an echo down the waters of the little creek, and Aunt Glory Ann stopped her work to listen.

“Ole Zack he too lazy t’ get dar ef he starts dar; better be boun’ f’ dat cott’n patch,” she said, addressing the wash-pot, as she resumed her rub-a-dub on the wash-board.

Nearer came the song—over the water—through the silent summertime of light and shade and harmonious blending of earth, sky and water.

“I’se gwine t’ quit dis wor’l o’ woe,
I’se boun’ f’ de promus lan’;
I’se ti’ed trabblin’ here below,
I’se boun’ f’ de promus lan’.”

“Dullawdy mussy! Dat foolyfied nigger call dat growlin’ an’ mumblin’ singin’! Zack cain’t do no sowt o’ singin.’ *Dis* is what *I* calls singin’ an’ glorifyin’ de Lawd mixed,” she confided to the tub.

She jerked off her bandana, cleared her throat, and raising her head she said to the shade above her, "Now jes yer liss'n. I gwine cut loose an' *sing*! Singin' ain't growlin', ner yit mumblyfide howlin'. Jes liss'n."

"A chawage t' keep I has,
A Gawd t' glo—a—ri—fy—ee,
A nebber dyin' so—el t' sa—ev
A' fittin' hit f' de sky—ee—ee."

Away over the creek a mocking-bird took up the lingering high notes and trilled to a wood-wren's twitter, while each swung on a topmost branch enjoying the sunshine—reveling in the balmy air.

"'Mawnin', Sis Gelory Ain."

"Dullawdy mussy! Dat's a po' way t' s'lute a sister in de Lawd. Skeer'd me plum white's a sheet! Whar yer come from, brer Zackyrias? How's all?"

"Po'ly, Sis Gelory Ain, po'ly."

Uncle Zack was a short, bow-legged old darky whom his enemies derisively called a "hoodoo nigger." His head was a great cushion of white wool, and his greasy old countenance wore an everlasting smirk. He had never been known to work, and though his wants were simple they were grudgingly supplied by his hard-fisted wife, who cooked for "young Mistic" and easily supported the brood of pica-ninnies that swarmed about her cabin.

“Yaasm, dat rheumatiz I has wid me always all de time; but I don’t stop a-praisin’ de Lawd f’ dat. Sis Gelory Ain, ’ligio’ns a mighty he’per.”

“He, he, he,” giggled Aunt Glory Ann.

“Wuffer yer laffin’, Sis Gelory Ain?”

“Ah, ah, ah! I jes’ sorter studyin’ ’bout whot old Miss say.”

“O’ man! I extonished, *I is dat!* laffin’ t’ old Miss!”

“Ole Mistis say lazy man’s ain’t *got* no ’ligion—caze de Lawd won’t hab ’em ’bout. Lazy folks too lazy t’ sarb de Lawd, dat’s gawspil fac’.”

Well,” Uncle Zack said reflectively, “I has de rheumrtiz an’ ain,t no ‘count f’ de plow ner de hoe. Eber sence ole Mawster kick de bucket ole Zack been po’ly.”

“Whyn’t yer cyore yerse’f, brer Zack? Rattlesnake ile cyore a allygater—when he hawngry f’ a tas’e o’ nigger meat.”

“I ain’t skeerd o’ snakes—nair kind o’ riptiles ain’t a-skeerin’ Zack.”

“I lay yer ain’t kill none,” Aunt Glory Ann said tauntingly.

“I know I is, too, kill lots o’ snakes ebry day I sees.”

“Whar, brer Zack?” Aunt Glory Ann stretched a sheet on the grass.

“Anywhar.”

"Whar?"

"Jes' anywhar."

"Yas, brer Zack, jes' anywhar is jes no-whar t' me."

"Yer knows dat goober' patch down yan'er—back o' de hawselot 'way down dar?"

"In cose."

"Wellum, yistiddy, down dar in dem high weeds I heern som'n go curis."

"How hit go, brer Zack!" Aunt Glory Ann's face was all smiles now. She rested her arms on the wash-board and listened attentively.

"I was steppin' 'long bris' an' jimplicute when I hears zip-zip-z-z-z-zip close t' my feet-ses. I know'd hit was a rattler f'om rattle-town. Den an' dar I whirls in an' up an' slewd dat varmint quick'n lightnin'."

"Dullawdy mussy!"

"Lawd, 'oman, dat ain't nigh all. I hears som'n go swish, swishin' in de grass, an' be-hole, an' lo! whatcher reckon' it air?"

"Ghos'es?" Aunt Glory Ann's voice sank to a whisper.

"Nome, *nome*."

"Ha'nts?"

"Nome; hit's enfont rattle-babies, smartes' leetle rascals yer eber seed—a-switchin' roun' lively huntin' f' dey maw."

"How much is dey?"

"I counts sixteen what comes up an' weeps 'bout dey po' daid mammy."

"What de matter wid dey mammy?"

"Daid; I done slewd *dat* snake."

"Did yer git de ile?"

"Done sot up all night bilin' de ile out'n dat riptile f' my rheumatiz, den here come Sis M'ria an' 'lows how hit's de ile in de *aigs* o' de snake whot's got de cyore in 'em."

"Dullawdy mussy!" ejaculated his audience, smoking a cob pipe.

"Dullawdy mussy!" hit's plum curis, but doe de rattlesnake aint no aig-layin' snake, no sir, *nair aig*."

"Is yer gwine 'etrackted, Sis Gelory Ain? Snakes all de time a-laying aigs same's a chicking hen."

"I 'sputes *dat*. Chick'n snake lay aigs."

"Dat's one," Uncle Zack counted on his fingers.

"Black snake lay aigs."

"Dat's two."

"Gyarther snake lay aigs."

"Dat's free."

"Kingsnake lay aigs."

"Dat's four."

"'Taint *nair pizen* snake a-layin' *nair aig*. No sir. Pizen snake ain't studin' nuffin' but fightin' somebody. See dat un' I hang dar f' rain?" pointing to her trophy in the tree.

"I seed her; she laid ober a nes'ful aigs dis year, I spec."

"'Taint no pizen snake ef she lays a aig," Aunt Glory Ann insisted.

"De ile whot cyores de pain in de jyints is sho de ile in de aig whot de rattlesnake lay," Uncle Zack placidly stated, "caze de plain ile o' de snake ain't a-gwine t' cyore de jynts. I tries dat ile, an' I knows."

"Dat's all right, brer Zack, when yer fin's dat nes' jes' sont f' ole Glory Ann an' maybyso she bleeve whot she see."

"I'm bleeved t' yer," Uncle Zack said with dignity. "Rattlesnakes has nes'es same's a hen, an' lays an' sots an' hatches same's a pyore, sho' nuf hen."

"Dullawdy mussy! Lis'en dat Annynois! Lyin' same's a dawg!"

"Look here, nigger! Yer cain't call *me* sick disregyardable chat. I say rattlesnakes *is* got aigs, an' I say hit till my tongue drap clean out'n dis mouf."

"Dullawdy mussy! 'Taint no rattlesnake aig, 'taint!"

"*I say dey air!*" Uncle Zack had risen and stood near the wash-tub facing Aunt Glory Ann.

"Take dat home wid yer, hoodo nigger!"

The blow she gave his head with her stick was enough to have felled an ox; another

whack across his shoulders when he turned to run gave impetus to his flight.

“Dullawdy mussy! Dat ole nigger ain’t needin’ no sawt o’ ile f’ his ole jyants—got ’bout much rheumatiz as a rabbit er er coon—jes’ need a good dose o’ battlin’-stick shook well on his lazy ole back, dat’ll cyore Zack’s rheumatiz. Snake aigs! *Rattlesnake* aigs! Sich a fool nigger!” and Aunt Glory Ann resumed her work and again caroled to the trees, the creek and the listening birds.



“THE LEAST OF THESE.”

THE RAIN poured pitilessly—not with the pleasant murmurous sounds as is usual with midsummer showers, like fairy feet pattering over the green lawn, nor with showery April-day coquetry; but with a hopeless, persistent downpour that filled the walks with mimic lakes and dripped with dull monotony from the vines on the porch.

The day was doubly drear, I had read until my aching eyes forbade farther persecution and I wandered aimlessly about the house until I reached the back gallery where in a blissful doze sat my laundress, Aunt Sallie.

“Having a good time, Aunt Sallie?” I asked pleasantly.

With a jerk of her turbaned head she awoke, and with a sleepy “Mornin’ Mistis,” she cleared her throat and smiled upon me.

“Say some’n t’ me, Mistis?”

“Are you having a good time?”

“Umk, umk,” she grunted. I is had better times, honey. Dishere rain don’t suit my work—gotty git dem clo’s dry some how er nother. Mistis, yer ’min’s me ’o Miss ’Sula,

unly Miss 'Sula's got de blues' eyes," she remarked shuffling around in her chair to face me.

"And who is Miss 'Sula?" I inquired, smiling into the pleasant black face before me.

"Looky here! Don't you know Miss 'Sula Tolliver, who lives in dat big house on de aige o' town?"

I shook my head.

"You ain't been here long, dats a fac'. Miss 'Sula's my young mistis, honey. We useter to be folks, chile. Our Qua'tter was plum' full o' niggers an' dat lot full o' big fat mules, too, in Maws Joe's time. Me an' Miss 'Sula got bawnd de same year an' atter her maw die Maws Joe, her paw, whirl in an' ma'ry a putty gal name Miss Helen. Den Maws Joe he dies an' leave Miss Helen an' Mars Jarn an' me an' Miss 'Sula de bag to' hol'. Den in 'bout a year Miss Helen she ups an' die, too. I ain't lef' Miss 'Sula 'n' Maws Jarn yit, an' what's mo' I ain't a gwine t' leave her."

"Is he her husband?"

"Who? Maws Jarn? Umk, umk. Nome. Miss 'Sula ain't got nair husb'n—no, chile—no mo' husb'n dan a rabbit. She des sont dat Maws Harry Cuthb't a windin' long 'fore de war. Nome. Maws Jarn's Miss 'Sula's ha'af brother, he is. Yes'm."

I sat silently waiting for her to go on with her story, for I suspected an old romance slum-

bered in the background of Aunt Sallie's thoughts.

"Yess'm," she presently resumed.

"We Tollivers ain't got nothn' t' hide—none of us ain't got nair thing disregyardable 'bout our pedigree, white ner black. Lots o' our same niggers in dat ole Qua'tter yit an' workin' de same ole plantashin. Po' Miss 'Sula gotty pow'ful load on her shoulders, somebody gotty he'p her."

"Is her brother a man now?"

"Yes'm. Maws Jarn's a mighty big man," with a sigh.

"Why does he not take care of her?"

"Lawd, honey, Maws Jarn can't take keer hisse'f—not nigh.

"Umk, umk, umk. You see, honey, Maws Jarn's 'flicted."

"How?"

"Maws Jarn's a bawn ejit, he don't know nothin' an' when Miss Helen died me an' Miss 'Sula promis't t' take keer dat chile long's we live—an' honey, we done it. Dis here what I'm tellin' you is a sho' fac', chile. Well, de rain sorter slacked up. I b'lieve I'll git dem clo's on de line."

* * * * *

A few days after Aunt Sallie had aroused a friendly curiosity concerning the Tollivers, I heard the whole touching story of Miss Ursula's life and sacrifice.

Her half brother, John Tolliver, had never spoken an articulate word in the twenty years of his life; he had never passed in mind beyond his first year of babyhood, and as he grew into sturdy physical boyhood, his bursts of temper and the demon of mischief which seemed to possess him made him an object of dread for years. Whatever mischief he found he did with might and main. Six feet tall and proportionately stout, he was capable of much wanton cruelty. Therefore, when he fell from the steeple of the village church where, in a freak of lunacy he had climbed, the terrorized villagers rejoiced, and when they heard from the physician that the idiot, known as "Miss Ursula's Johnnie," was maimed for life, they were indeed glad.

Then the utter helplessness that demanded constant and watchful care made life a weary thing for Mis Ursula and Aunt Sallie.

Miss Ursula's friends had urged her to send her brother to the safe seclusion of an asylum, but her indignant refusals forever silenced importunities of a like nature.

Though only twenty when she gave her solemn vow to the dying stepmother, Miss Ursula realized in a measure what her life would be, and as the years unfolded their slow, long-drawn, torture, she felt the blight that the promise had laid upon her life—a sacrifice so

disproportioned to the end to be gained. Such sacrifices have been made ever since Eve shielded Adam in Eden, and will continue as long as women live. Every day of her lonely life Miss Ursula recalled those gasping, dying words, "‘Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these’—May God deal with you as you deal with my child," and the years crept sadly on, filled with unremitting toil and anxious care.

Each day was lived out faithfully and truly. Not one rosy dawn nor flaming sunset, nor the shining hours between were ever stained by careless living. On the Other Side, beautiful duplicates of these days of self-abnegation waited for Miss Ursula and Aunt Sallie—days of undesecrated holiness, of joy and of glory; for not once in all these weary years of bondage had the two women sent an impure, unprofitable day into eternity.

Lovers came and went; for in her youth Miss Ursula was a beautiful, vivacious girl—now at forty she was a gray statue, gray-haired, gray-eyed, gray-clad.

Aunt Sallie had clung to her through changing scenes and fortune. Neither woman complained, and each religiously loved and helped the other. Two women with clean, white souls—albiet one wore a black skin, the spirit within her was God-blest and fair.

Twenty years!

Miss Ursula was thinking it over on this, the twentieth anniversary of her stepmother's death. Twenty years! What may not happen in twenty years?

She had laid flowers on the two graves in the garden at sunset, and leaning against the marble death record, Miss Ursula had prayed that the dead might know she had kept her vow. Then, in faith most holy, she believed her prayer answered, and returned to the house. The imbecile had been unusually troublesome that week, and in affectionate charity both women said: "Johnnie is sick"—he was always sick when particularly unmanageable; neither spoke of the trouble he gave.

Though unable to walk, the idiot was dangerously strong, and in his spasms of rage he would crush the life out of any living thing that came within his reach.

A neighbor called after supper and gave Miss Ursula a letter; it was a rare occurrence, for she had no correspondents. Every one belonging to the far away, lovelit days, seemed to have dropped out of her life.

After soothing the whining idiot in the next room to sleep, Miss Ursula sat on one side of the little table which held the lamp, while her friend, Aunt Sallie, nodded and knit on the other. No word was spoken. Miss Ursula calmly opened the letter, and as calmly read to the

end, then folding it as silently, she sat looking into the fire—thinking—thinking—thinking.

“Ump! umk!” Aunt Sallie grunted; but her companion heeded not.

Youth had gone—ran Miss Ursula’s thoughts—and with it went all of grace and beauty she had ever possessed. No need to read the record of twenty monotonous years in their dreary stretch ’tween then and now! It was, she felt, as if a gay butterfly had folded its wings and been again shut up in a chrysalis.

“Umk—um—umk!” Aunt Sallie felt snubbed.

Gazing into the fire Miss Ursula’s soul was far away. That closely written letter was a revelation—an awakening of long slumbering memories. She was now past forty—an old maid—and her prim little ways and habits, oft-times ludicrous peculiarities, were not the offsprings of illnature or selfishness, but sore things learned in the dreariness of poverty and sacrifice. She was thinking of the writer of that letter, Harry Cuthbert, “Handsome Harry,” the girls called him in the old days. She had sent Harry away twenty years ago. Twenty years had not dimmed her loyalty; she was as faithful to her promise now as then; never would she leave Johnnie. For twenty years she heard nothing of Harry Cuthbert; no sign

nor token until this letter came. He was returning—for her, he had written.

Miss Ursula was so silent in the days that followed, that Aunt Sallie resented it.

“Umk! umk! umk! Miss ‘Sula des set on dat back gal’ry a read’n’ an’ a read’n’ same’s if Sallie ain’t no whar. Umk—umk—an’ when she ain’t on dat gal’ry she’s standin’ by de graveyard fence a lookin’ plum’ curi’s an’ quare. Huh, dishere don’t suit dis nigger lady! I’m a Tolliver myse’f—me!

The little girls of a neighbor played around Miss Ursula’ door and romped under the old trees, and wondered why she never spoke or told them stories for a whole week.

* * * * *

I saw Miss Ursula at church one bright spring morning, and when the words, “Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these,” were read, I noticed tears falling upon the gray dress beside me, and smiles of ineffable sweetness glorified Miss Ursula’s pure, pale face as she sat with bowed head and folded hands.

“God is so good,” she whispered, when we were leaving the church.

“Yes He is,” smiling at my look of pity.

“He has never let me doubt for a moment that the Cross I am bearing is intended for ultimate good to me, and the thought that I am absolutely necessary to at least one life, keeps

me contented and grateful. Yes, dear, God is good to me."

This, then, was her comfort and support; this the reward of twenty years of bondage.

"Inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these," she quoted, when she shook my hand in parting.

A week later Miss Ursula was sweeping off the back gallery, and as she swept she searched her heart—her life—her soul. That mysterious combination of mind and matter, herself, her secret springs of action, her motives themselves, all of which she concluded were imperfect. The most accurate knowledge of herself was yet to be revealed, when she would know in loving certainty whether her life had been "an offering worthy of Heaven."

"What in me is dark, illumine; what is weak, raise and support," she prayed when she hung the broom on its accustomed nail. Thus meditating and praying, she was startled to hear voices on the front porch—a child's glad laugh joined by the deeper voice of a man.

Through the long hall she hastened, to find a pretty little girl frolicking with the kittens, while a handsome, middle-aged man, smiled in symyathetic approval.

"Good morning!" the child cried, dropping her kittens in her haste to reach the gray-

clad figure in the doorway. "Will you please tell my Aunt Ursula we've come. I am named for her, and we've come to take her home with us."

Miss Ursula stooped and kissed the upturned face, and looked into the brown eyes—eyes so like the pair that once held her light o' love.

"Are you Miss Ursula Tolliver?" the man asked, in pained surprise.

"I don't wonder you ask, Harry, but I should have known you anywhere."

They sat upon the old porch and talked—the old porch where twenty years ago he had sworn undying fealty—while the child romped with the kittens.

This pale gray woman was not the one whose image Harry Cuthbert had treasured so many years in the *sanctum sanctorum* of heart and soul—those years in which another had called him husband. This prim, gray spinster who towered bony and lank before dropping limply into a chair was not the angel of his love-dream.

The shock of this mouse-colored caricature of the vivacious beauty of happier days murdered long cherished hopes and romance fled affrighted.

This pale, gray ghost the once beautiful Ursula Tolliver? He could not realize it; his

dream of re-union and sweet companionship melted like mist before the sun.

Harry Cuthbert had come back to his native village for a mother for his orphan. What a fool, he told himself, he had been to forget that in a blighting life like hers had been she must fade—fade and wither.

“I may not see you again,” he said when he shook her hand at parting.

“Good-bye, Harry, and God bless you,” had been her parting words.

Miss Ursula choked back a sob when she watched the father and child drive away. The gates of Heaven had opened a very little way, and in swinging back had crushed her and left her outside. The Cross was heavy and bitter today and the thongs that bound it very sharp and cruel. Her face was whiter and more pinched when she went in to quiet the frettings of “the least of these”—that half-brother, whose life had so blotted the light of Heaven from hers. When she knelt beside and soothed him the thought came to her, “Have I kept the faith—have I prayed, trusted and worked enough?”

“There, there, Johnnie, 'Sula knows,” she said coaxingly; “'Sula knows.”

The words came involuntarily to her lips and broke the dumb anguish of her soul.

“'Sula knows,” she said a hundred times a day. It meant love, strength and sympathy.

The imbecile understood nothing, but the sound of her voice comforted him.

"Johnnie trusts me as I should trust God. In His sight I am as ignorant and helpless as he," she said to Aunt Sallie's mild reproaches.

Harry Cuthbert went back to the village in a paradoxical state of feeling. He felt that the man who for twenty years had been absent from his native shades had best remain away forever.

To return is to destroy illusions heretofore delighted in. Dear, familiar friends are changed—dead—married or gone away. Few stings burn sharper than the consciousness of being a stranger where one was once a cherished comrade. Harry Cuthbert felt a twinge of resentment for Miss Ursula for the metamorphosis she had suffered.

Alas! The ideal is never real in this life. Ideals are like mountain peaks whose everlasting snows gleam and glitter amid the deep azure of the far away skies; we look up to them wistfully and when the weary ascent is made we are disappointed—our souls long for the bright valley below—we sigh to remember the fragrant shadowy woods, the rippling brooks, the sunshine and songs of birds; we long again for the sweet, whispering leaf-music of the deserted valley.

Poor, faded Ursula! So good, so pure, yet so unbeautiful! Homely faces, things that

other men bore philosophically, even pleasantly, were repulsive to Harry Cuthbert. He shrank from a plain face as from a loathsome object. He chided his unfaithful soul and could but acknowledge to his conscience that had their respective positions been reversed *she* would never have played the craven as he had done.

Miss Ursula had no such bitter reproach; she opened her oftenest-read Book and smiled through her tears as she re-read the story—the sweet, safe story of Everlasting Love; then strong in soul she went about her accustomed duties; for now the Cross was lighter. He exalted not personal beauty, nor wealth nor position, but commended gentleness and lovingness and the lifting of burdens. Miss Ursula smiled again, realizing the nearness of the Everlasting Arms.

Harry Cuthbert scolded himself into positive unhappiness and his accusing conscience gave no respite. He scolded the little one into tears and drove into the village a very miserable man.

At that moment Miss Ursula and Aunt Sally were ministering to the shrinking imbecile in the rear room.

“He’s cold,” Aunt Sallie said, piling on more covers. “What sort o’ spell you call dis, Miss ‘Sula?”

“Paralysis. There, there, 'Sula knows,” she murmured, wiping the death damp from the poor idiotic face. Slowly through the darkness and gloom the light of the better knowledge dawned, and that Peace which a consciousness of simple faith brings lighted the plain, faded features, and when Miss Ursula folded the cruel, restless hands, kissed the narrow, receding forehead, she said, tremblingly :

“Well, Sallie, our work is done,”

“Yes'm, umk, umk. I got Miss 'Sula an' Miss 'Sula got ole Sallie. Umk, umk. Des us two lef', dat's all, umk.

* * * * *

So sad is my story that my heart has ached with the writing of it and my eyes overflowed when I first heard this record of the heroism of faithful hearts in one of life's by-places.

Miss Ursula and her loyal Sallie still live and love in the old home. They are no longer worn and tired, and through each wrinkled face—one white, one black—the glory and beauty of the soul illumines and in each pair of faded eyes shines a reflection of the light of the New Jerusalem.

*RICHARD EDWARDS, ESQUIRE,
COTTON BROKER.*

“FOR MY PART,” the voice came from behind the scarlet and gold portieres.

“I had as lief talk to a stick!”

“Or a pair of tongs,” laughed another.

“Or a rag doll,” suggested Nathalie De Barrios.

“Oh!” sweet India Leland sighed. “One can amuse ones’ self with a rag doll. I still remember my infantile affection for one particularly distorted, bumpy specimen.”

“But that man!”

“He never imagines what a bore he is, poor fellow!”

“Ah,” I thought, smiling, “it’s young Brownlow they are discussing. What a joke! Pity he doesn’t hear it,” and I mentally quoted “O, wad some power.”

“I cannot agree with you,” said a calm, smooth voice, which I recognized as Helen Savage’s—an old-time friend. “I like his quiet dignity.”

“Quiet fiddlesticks!” scornfully ejaculated the first voice.

Quiet dignity, indeed! Young Brownlow had not the dignity of a sparrow; in fact, he was as kittenish as a school girl.

Of whom could they be talking? I could not just then extricate myself, so hemmed in was I by the laughing, merry bevy of "sweet girl graduates" and their respective admirers.

"Now, Ethel," came the voice of Helen Savage, "what is your objection to the gentleman in question?"

"Well—I just don't like him."

" 'I do not like you, Dr. Fell,' " India Leland quoted.

"I always have a reason for *my* likes and dislikes; there's no Dr. Fell in it."

"We are waiting, Ethel."

"Oh, I don't know—he's so cottony."

A deluge of rippling laughter greeted this speech.

" 'So cottony.' And what is that, pray?"

I listened breathlessly for the explanation.

"When I said cottony, I *meant* cottony. He talks cotton, buys and sells cotton, and when he dies I hope he will go to cotton."

"Why, Ethel! You absurd child!" Helen Savage cried, stifling a laugh.

"It's the truth, all the same, she insisted. "Last evening he dined with us, and he and papa talked nothing but cotton; therefore, I again declare him to be a cottony man."

"That's quite original, Ethel," again Helen's voice. "I have known him all my life. I would call him 'booky'—not cottony."

Of whom *were* they speaking? I began to feel a trifle curious.

"Yes," continued Helen Savage, "I have known him all my life, and I never knew a—"

"Oh, do hush! Don't preach, for pity sake! That man—"

"Is a magnificent—"

"Too cottony, too cottony!" cried Ethel.

"I think him very entertaining. He knows Dickens and Milton, and—"

"Cotton," Ethel put in.

Of what manner of man were they speaking? I was being fairly tortured.

"I think he's mighty nice—so dignified and quiet," spoke India Leland.

"*If*, cried Ethel, impatiently; *if* there's anything I detest next to a cottony man, it is one of these quiet, wooden men. I have seen car loads of men with no more animation than—than——"

"Rag dolls?"

"Yes, rag dolls will do. I like some snap in a man—a spice of deviltry and no cotton."

"I think every man has a sufficiency of his Satanic Majesty in his composition; for, Satan being a personage of human passions and super-human power, finds easy sailing into the sanc-

tum sanctorum of men's natures, and usually gets the lion's share of men's affections and interests," said Helen Savage.

"I can forgive anything in a man—*anything* except dignity and cotton. I have positively heard more sighs over the price of cotton than all the cotton in the South would cover. Oh, I hate cotton! By the way, Helen, is that last your opinion of Mr. Dick Edwards?" asked Ethel.

"No, not of him, particularly."

"Good heavens!" I mentally cried. "They are talking of *me*." What an unpleasant discovery!

"Who is Mr. Dick Edwards?" innocently inquired Marie Dupont.

"The cottony man, of course," Ethel said, with a sniff of disgust.

"He of Miltonic weight and completeness?"

"According to Helen and India—yes."

"I'll wager that of all Ethel has heard of cotton, she is still ignorant of the price of the fleecy staple," Helen Savage said banteringly.

"Don't Ethel know that yesterday December cotton went down five points more?" cried that persistent cotton-hater.

"What is a point in cotton—not cards?" asked India.

"Bless your beautiful heart, honey, you don't catch me napping—on cotton. A 'point'

represents one cent. One hundred points means one hundred cents—equals one very large round dollar," Ethel said, slowly.

"Correct!" called Helen Savage.

"I declare! I didn't know that," confessed Miss Dupont.

"It isn't your fault, Marie, that your papa is a lawyer instead of an unhappy cotton broker. If you had heard the heart-rending sighs with which a single 'point' comes tumbling, as I have been regaled every day for months, you would all know about this miserable cotton business. Papa is full of it, and never fails to bring all the lowest 'points' home for dinner every blessed evening. To add insult to injury, Mr. Dick Edwards comes in with more 'points,' and—always below. I detest cotton and cottony men!"

A merciful lull in the excruciating conversation in the curtained alcove, and in another moment the golden head and perfect, flower-like face of Nathalie De Barrios filled, like a glimpse of heaven, the parting in the curtains.

I looked up—she was gone.

"Oh, girls! He is right there—he has heard every word," in a stage whisper.

"A lovely 'kettle' o' fish!" from India.

"Oh, Ethel, think of all you've said!"

"And weep," suggested Nathalie.

"Well, girls, what is said is said," Ethel remarked reflectively, "and I can't unsay it.

At any rate I said no harm, if he *did* listen!",

"You didn't say he was cottony! Oh, no!" Marie observed, mischievously.

"Nor that 'when he died he would go to cotton,' no indeed?"

"You need not guy me. I had as lief go out and tell him more of himself."

"Don't over-rate your strength, Ethel."

"Strength?"

"Yes, strength, courage."

"India, do you deem me so weak?"

"You wouldn't dare."

"Wouldn't I?"

In another moment Miss Ethel Staunton, blushing and hesitating, stood before me.

"I regret that you heard my remarks about you, Mr. Edwards," she said, "but you don't know how I *hate*—cotton!"

"And 'cottony men,' " I added.

"I don't take a word back," she said, stiffly, "but I wouldn't wound your feelings for the world. You know I wouldn't, don't you, Mr. Dick?"

"How about the 'stick,' 'tongs' and 'rag doll,' Miss Ethel?"

She had disappeared before I finished.

"I believe Helen knew he was there all the time," India laughed.

"Even when she fought for his 'booky' reputation?" from Marie Dupont.

"That is not kind. Helen did not know. Did you, dear?" asked Nathalie.

"I should have said nothing had I known." Helen's voice had a tinge of resentment.

"You feel relieved since you ate 'humble pie,' Ethel? What is now your opinion of Mr. Edwards?"

"Too cottony by half."

A suppressed giggle reached me.

The knowledge that I had been "picked to pieces," that I, plain Dick Edwards, was the victim of the unblushing remarks of that most gracious and beautiful bevy in the alcove. To say the least, the knowledge was a stunning blow.

Since my days of school life were over I had been a strictly business man, had gone very little into society, and now I forgot Helen Savage's kind defense in the conviction, that, by the majority I was declared "cottony" and "a stick." Even an inanimate rag doll was preferred to the society of Richard Edwards, Esquire, cotton broker.

My father had, years ago, established the house, and on his retirement from business, his mantle had fallen upon my shoulders; therefore, business, commercial and otherwise, had for ages claimed my closest attention.

My father had educated me liberally, then bade me follow in his footsteps, and, as a happy

venture in cotton had miraculously enriched us, I still stuck to the cotton bale. Though not yet thirty years of age, I was already a plodding business man, and that most deplorable of creatures—a bachelor. I again made an effort to get out of earshot and India Leland stood before me.

“Come into our retreat and rest, Mr. Dick,” she said, holding back the curtain.

Feeling very desperate, I arose.

“‘Come into the garden, Maude,’ ” Ethel softly sang.

“What are you all in here for?” I asked, when I stood within beauty’s bower.

“We fled the wrath of persistent dancers. We were too tired even to flirt when we sought this oasis,” Nathalie said.

“But not too tired to gossip?” I asked, looking at Ethel’s flushed face.

“Or to discuss the price of cotton?”

“Look out, Mr. Dick, you will find yourself put out if you say unparliamentary things. We will ‘lay you on the table’ in two minutes. Won’t we, girls?” Ethel said with bravado.

“Isn’t it nice in here—‘far from the madding crowd?’ ” Nathalie said, prettily, touching my arm with her feather-tipped fan.

“Very nice,” I agreed.

At last, on the verge of some desperate act, I made my escape, and walked rapidly homeward.

Strange, but I resented the epithets bestowed upon me.

"Cottony!"

I repeated the word aloud in the solitude of my library.

"Cottony!"

Somehow I did not see the funny side of the newly-coined word, as I enjoyed it when it first came to me from the alcove earlier in the evening.

I knew I was not an object of interest, or a fascinating person to ladies, for I was awkward and reserved; but that fact had never troubled me. I enjoyed the liberty of my untrammelled life. My cigars, books, papers and easy chair were far more entertaining than the dear girls could ever be.

"Cottony!" I repeated again as I pushed the evening paper aside and lighted a cigar.

"Cottony!"

Come to think of it, I had discussed the deplorably low price of cotton with a friend at dinner a few days before, and that frivolous lily of the fields, Ethel Staunton, didn't like it.

I am not a vindictive man nor do I hold my memory "a row of hooks upon which to hang grudges," but then and there with one hand upon Kingsley's *"Hypatia,"* I vowed a vow.

Miss Ethel Staunton should regret, if not recall, her absurd word "cottony" as applied to Richard Edwards, Esquire, Cotton Broker.

My household consisted of my maiden aunt, Prudence, and myself, with those necessary, comfortable troubles—old family servants. My aunt was a quiet, pleasant woman much given to church and charity work. It had been for years her fondest hope that I should marry a “sensible woman,” and bring her into our beautiful, though lonely, home.

Helen Savage was a great favorite with my aunt, indeed, she had often asserted that “Helen was the only sensible girl in town.” I grieve to state that my aunt sometimes lectured me, and when she came into my study that night, I saw from her face that some important question had aroused her.

“I do you no injustice, Dick” she began, “when I say that you are blinder than a whole regiment of moles or a barnfull of bats.”

“Well, what now?” I inquired.

“It has been a mystery all my life why men will pass by the most sensible of women without a thought of their excellent, home-making qualities and ‘take for the having and have for the taking’ the soft, giggling caricatures of womanhood to call by the sacred name of wife.”

I smoked in silence. As I before mentioned, my Aunt Prudence was an old maid.

“Maybe,” she continued, “it is as Dr. Johnson says.”

"What did he say?" I meekly asked.

"Just this, 'Men know that women are an over-match for them; therefore they choose the weakest and most ignorant.'"

My aunt laughed softly as she finished, evidently finding much comfort in the quotation.

Psychical research is every day developing new curiosities and startling truths of mind and spirit, and the science was surely establishing itself in our house. Aunt Prudence read me perfectly, and I in turn understood her. She approved of Helen Savage, and as heartily disapproved of my now-and-then attention to pretty Ethel.

"Dick," she again addressed me.

"Where were you Thursday evening?"

"At the opera."

"Alone?"

"Oh, no, I went with Miss Staunton."

"Dick Edwards! Ethel Staunton! A poor, frivolous little butterfly! My poor, silly boy! What manner of man are you, Dick?"

Without awaiting a solution to her pathetic and curious question, she asked another.

"Are you going down to that merry-mak-tomorrow?"

"I hadn't thought of it," I replied.

"I want you to take Helen Savage and contradict the opinion your going with Ethel must have made upon sensible people."

"Very well."

"You will go with Helen? The boat leaves at nine."

"All right," I said, smiling. "I will be on hand."

"With Helen Savage?"

"With Helen Savage," I asserted as she left the room.

I leaned back in my chair, lighted a third cigar, experiencing a feeling of relief in being alone; but my congratulations were of short duration, for in walked my old nurse without ceremony.

"Good evening, Mammy," was my greeting.

"Tollerable, Maws Dick. Whotcher doin' sottin' up yere des wid yer po' lone se'f?" she asked, dropping in a heap on the hearthrug. "Jes a sottin' yere in disher lonesum cawnder 'dout nobody f' t' be a talkin' wid. Sottin' yere, bress Gawd, same's dayn't nair 'oman in de worl'. Whyntcher git cher a wife, mon?"

"The girls don't like me, Mammy."

"Um-um-um. I lay 'tain't nar one dar t' tell yer Mammy dat onposslble tale. De 'om'n what de g-o-o-d L-a-w-d done make f' Mr. Dick Ed'ards is—is, *I* knows," she said with a wise look on her black face.

"Who is she?"

"De fus' letter in dat 'om'ns name is Miss'ellen Sabage, dat's de letter. 'Pear lak yer smawt nuf t' guess de res'."

"I am going down the river with her to-morrow."

"Praise de g-o-o-d L-a-w-d ! Son, yer go wid Miss'ellen and yer ax her, too. Bettern be gwine t' baid now, rooster done crowed f' midnight," and with this last piece of information, she left me.

The next morning dawned beautifully clear, for which I felt grateful. A picnic excursion is to me always a bore, even in fine weather, and I half regretted my promise of the night before.

At last the time for leaving came, and as I stood on the upper deck of the boat with Helen Savage, I felt that I would gladly have exchanged places, for the day, with any criminal behind the bars. By this time the black smoke had begun to roll out of the great smoke-stacks mingled with fiery sparks. A moment later the captain made his appearance on the forward part of the steamer's deck, and, grasping the bell cord gave it a few vigorous jerks. As the great bell swung to and fro with a sonorous clang, the mate ordered the lines let go and the stage hauled on board.

I noticed everything particularly, though did not feel interested. I saw the pilot from his little cabin above, signaled with a smaller bell to the engineer, and the wheels spun 'round. With a roar and hiss of steam the

great paddle wheels began to revolve, and the boat moved out into the current, making huge waves on either side, and leaving a path of foam behind.

"There are two sick ladies and one cripple on board," I heard India Leland say; she was behind the "Texas."

"Ethel, there are hundreds of cotton bales below, aren't you glad?" Nathalie de Barrios cried.

"Ah! Oh! Girls, here is Mr. Edwards."

"I don't believe you," I heard Ethel say.

"No matter, he is here with Helen Savage."

"Well, I guess he is following that cotton. A very natural thing for him to do—he is so very cottony."

"Let's go below," Helen said, her face aflame.

We were conversing very pleasantly about Marie Correlli's wonderful books, when we heard the cry of fire from below. The party were still on deck, and, besides ourselves, three invalids occupied the salon.

All was hurry and confusion, and when I went out on the guards, I saw that one side of the boat was enveloped in flames.

Running to the other side, I saw two boats had been lowered, and in one sat Helen Savage, serene as usual. The boats were filling

rapidly with our picnic party, when Ethel appeared, bearing in her arms the crippled woman, who was safely handed into a boat. The two invalids were in the first and largest boat. Each was crowded and could take no more aboard when they pushed off from the burning steamer.

"What are you going to do, Mr. Edwards? Try a cotton bale?" Ethel asked, hysterically. I was startled, shocked.

"I thought you had gone. Why did you not?" I asked, sharply.

"That poor woman cried so pitifully, I forgot to go. It's pretty warm here."

And so it was. The fire was everywhere now, and the heat intense.

"Everybody seems to take to cotton," Ethel said, as the men forsook the burning boat. She winked the tears bravely back and asked:

"Shall we try it, Mr. Dick?"

I was waiting for this proposition, and when I had her very unsafely seated upon a rocking, swaying bale of cotton and swam beside her, I thought her very subdued and dignified.

"Oh, I almost fell over into the water!" she cried, when the bale gave an unusual lurch.

"Do look, Mr. Dick. There's a baldheaded

man just ahead. Don't he look too funny with his head popping up and down in the water?"

There is a time to laugh and a time to weep, and this was the day for lamentations, and I told her so.

She was silent a moment, then said, very sweetly :

"Mr. Dick, I have no right to give you so much trouble, but I forgot—"

"I understand," I replied. "Here are more boats, or rather the same boats."

"Do you think my little old woman is safe?"

"They are all on shore and have sent the boats back," I answered, impatiently.

Now came the tug of war; but after many efforts I at last conveyed Miss Staunton from her risky seat upon the half-submerged bale of cotton to the boat.

"Oh, Mr. Dick!" she cried, looking around, "The river is full of cotton bales, and not going up, either." She pointed to where the ungainly bales were going down stream. "I always hated cotton."

"But for our friendly bale, you might have been drowned," I said, maliciously.

"You are in a horrid temper, Mr. Dick, while I am feeling so grateful to you," she said, repentantly, when we were again ashore.

"And it was so selfish in me to have been

so careless—to have given you so much trouble. Why, Mr. Dick! You are right wet—fairly drenched!”

“You forget,” I said, sternly, “that I have been in the river an hour and a half.”

“And for me! It was all my fault! I’m so sorry. I will tell you what I’ll do, Mr. Dick, I’ll ‘take back’ all I said about cotton and—”

“‘Cottony men?’”

“Yes, indeed! gladly.”

“And ‘sticks’ and ‘tongs?’” I went on mercilessly.

“Y-e-s,” she stammered between a laugh and a sob.

“And ‘rag dolls?’”

“Everything—anything!” she cried, desperately.

“And marry the cottony man? I continued making a final plunge.

“Oh, Mr. Dick! What for?”

“Because, you sweet, unselfish child, I need you, I love you, Ethel.”

“And you will forgive me for giving you so much trouble—for being so careless?”

“I forgive everything. I’m waiting, Ethel?”

“Oh, Mr. Dick, you are so—”

“‘Cottony?’”

“Oh, no, I adore cotton,” she declared.

"And cottony men?"

"*One*," she cried, running off to where the others were grouped under a cotton shed.

Helen Savage was conversing as pleasantly as if nothing unusual had happened. She held an open lunch basket upon her lap and enjoyed its contents.

"Why, Ethel! You are all in a flutter! What is the matter?" India Leland asked.

"Come here, dearie, and let me tell you what a noble unselfish girl you are," the helpless woman called from her improvised seat.

"I wish you were my daughter," she continued, with Ethel's hands in hers. "What a dear loving wife she will make for some lucky man."

"Ethel is a very thoughtless girl. Think of the trouble she made for Mr. Edwards!" Helen Savage interposed.

"Was I a trouble, Mr. Dick?" Ethel asked, wistfully.

"Not a bit of it."

"And never will be?"

"Never," I recklessly swore.

"Always a joy and pleasure, Mr. Dick?"

"Always," I repeated, fervently.

"Well!" exclaimed pretty Nathalie De Barrios, waving her fan. "That popular diversion begun on Olympus, and continued in

Avernus, seems to have had rather a tempestuous session on the river today."

"Love-making, like death, 'has all seasons for its own,'" India Leland remarked, with mock gravity.

"Yes," Nathalie sighed. "The old ever-new story continues to disturb the placidity of imaginative lads and lassies, and—"

"Yes," India laughed. "All except Helen Savage. The heart-burnings that worried Paris and Helen of Troy, the hope of the house of Montague, and little Miss Capulet never touches our 'sensible' Helen."

Miss Savage smiled and continued lunching solitaire.

"But—what became of the cotton?" Nathalie suddenly asked.

"Still going down," Ethel laughed gleefully as she turned towards the river.

"And the 'cottony man?'"

"Hush!" Ethel whispered, "I've reformed—changed my mind, as women will."

"Ethel is crazy," Marie Dupont concluded.

"No," snapped Helen Savage, "it's Mr. Dick Edwards who is daft."

"Helen Savage!" from Nathalie, reproachfully.

"Savage Helen!" cried India Leland.

AUNT BECKY AND HER THANKY-BAG.

A QUEER PICTURE they made—this old gentleman, dark as ebony, tall, and stately, holding on to the arm of his fat, squat wife; her hands were gripped around a small hand-bag. Southerners recognized this couple to be old-time plantation darkies “done come t’ da Fa’r.” Indeed, Uncle Sam and Aunt Becky themselves realized the fact that they were inside the gates of the White City and stood gazing with bulging eyes and gaping mouths upon its wonders. After wandering for hours among strange sights, whispering now and then to each other their respective impressions, this funny old pair entered the Midway Plaisance. Aunt Becky’s eyes brightened as she hastened to point her liege lord’s attention to the African village.

“Niggers! de pyore niggers, Sambo!” she whispered. “Um, um, *um!* What curi’s folks dey is! Jes de pyore nigger ’dout any trimmins. Looky!”

“Taint nair nigger dar,” Uncle Sam asserted.

“Howkum dey’nt niggers? Lawd sabe yer rotten soul! Look dar, den! What dat f’ Gawd sake?”

The "pyore niggers," with their strange gibberish, uncanny antics, and tattooed faces, made Aunt Becky put her "thanky-bag," as she called her hand-satchel, under her arm and draw closer to Uncle Sam.

"Maws Jack done tole me 'bout dem pock-pickts whar steals yer money an' I lays dese air de folks. I bet a mule doe dey ain't stealin' dish yere thanky-bag what Miss Lou done gib Mammy!" she whispered.

"Lawd A'mighty!" she next exclaimed; "who is dey, Sambo Vinegar?"

"Afykins, jes Afykins, dat's all dey is," Uncle Sam replied with a superior air, as he threw one foot well in front.

"Is dat a man-pusson er a plain varmint? What de creeter doin', Sam?" whispered Aunt Becky, with a firmer clutch on her thanky-bag.

"He seem mighty peacerful lak, jes settin' a windin' fread, 'pear lak," Uncle Sam said, smiling upon the old man as immovable as a graven image.

"Whot dem creeters doin' dar on dat flat-fawm? My breesed Lawd! Le's git out'n here, Sam," Aunt Becky urged.

"Jes be easy, Becky, honey, dat's part de show."

The weird capers of a war dance, the noise of the drums, piping of reeds and general

pandemonium of Africans upon the platform was bad for Aunt Becky's nerves.

"I tell yer, Sam Vinegar, I gwine quit here! I is done plum dumflustercated, gotty bad backache, gotty fluttermercation o' de hawt 'sides a ketch in my side, I is dat!"

Poor old soul! she trembled and gasped, and her black face grew ashen for sheer fright.

"Look 't me, Becky, honey—see me chat wid de gemm'n f'om Afyky."

"Les git, Sam," pleaded Aunt Becky.

"All right," and Uncle Sam led her away.

"Jes' look dar, honey. Ain't dem curi's li'l' mules, de curi's li'l' mules yer eber did see." Uncle Sam poked a donkey in the side.

"Hit's daid."

"No hit ain't daid, eber see a mule daid on hit's feets?" Uncle Sam gave another punch.

"I spec' I hate t' 'pen' on one o' dem mules f' a crap—laigs too li'l' an' weakly, look curi's. Whar all dese folks es lib at when dey's home, Sambo?"

"Jes' wait till I talks wid dis gemm'n."

Uncle Sam approached a son of the desert and, doffing his hat, said in his most happy manner:

"I'se proud t' see yer, suh; pow'ful gre't show, nebber seed sich a pyeart crowd 'fo' in my life. I tell yer, suh, I'se bin 'roun' some, but by Gawge, suh, I nebber did see sich a

sight o' folks in all my bawn days. No, sah, hit's a plum cur'osutty, suh."

"The Soudanese stared stolidly into space.

"He's deaf," said a mischievous looker-on.

"He does not understand your language, uncle," a lady said as she passed.

"I say, Mister," Uncle Sam shouted, "is yer deef?"

"No reply except the sphinx-like stare.

"Dat feller 'spec' I'se a hoodoo nigger, Becky."

Then a happy thought came to Uncle Sam.

"My entitlements is Sambo Vinegar, suh, I wos bawn in Nawfawk, Ferginny, suh, an' I bin t' Nyawleen's too, suh. Now, how's yer copperosity segashuatin'? Whar's de place whar yer libs at when yers at home?" Uncle Sam yelled with another bow and flourish of his hat.

"Well," he exclaimed, turning with a quiz-zical smile to the crowd he had attracted, "dat sho' do beat Bob Tail an' he beat de debble."

"Gawd knows yer beller loud nuf t' skeer a daid hawse—beller same's a allygater," Aunt Becky remarked, with her nose in the air.

The stolid son of the east still gazed—silently dreaming, mayhap, of the City of the Sun, the grateful shadow of an obelisk or the Sacred River.

"I ain't gwine fool 'way no mo' my time

on sich onry oncomsponserble trash. I said 't fus' dey 'n't no niggers. Ain't I say dat wo'd, Becky?" Uncle Sam asked, vaguely hoping for an "I-told-you-so."

"Yas, but den, dey is de pyore niggers, dat's de Gawd's trufe," Aunt Becky insisted.

"They are Egyptians, Auntie," a pleasant-faced lady said.

"What's dat?"

"People who live in Egypt."

"Whar's dat at, honey?"

"Don't you know it was in Egypt that the childred of Israel——"

"Lawd sabe me! yes, honey. Whar's Mosis, chile? Show 'im t' me quick, honey."

"Moses didn't come."

"I lay if ole Mosis had a know'd whot a big thing dish yere Fa'r is he wouldn't a missed hit f' nuffin. Honey, is dat ongodly ejit dar a shonuff Gypsum?"

"Oh, yes."

Aunt Becky moved nearer the woman in gray, drawn by a feeling of kinship.

"Honey, is yer come f'om Arkinsaw?"

"Yes; why?"

"Yer ain't nair widder'om'n, is yer, honey?"

"No, indeed."

"I 'lowed as yer didn't look pyeart 'nuf f' a widdero'm'n, an' den I sees yer ain't frisky

nuf, needer, f' a widder'om'n. Honey, is yer may'd?"

"Yes, I am married."

"Yer come f'm Arkinsaw, too?" Aunt Becky fairly beamed upon the little woman in gray.

"Honey, dis ole nigger lady come f'm dar, too, and hit take ole Becky Vinegar jes one glimp' o' de eye t' know a quality lady f'm white trash when she sot her eye on her de fus' time. Yes, honey, me an' ole Sam come way f'm Arkinsaw, an' I'm blest ef I know'd dey wos dis many folks in de wor'l—much lessen in Hebb'n. Honey, yer's a mighty likely gal; looks sorter lak Miss Lou's gals. Miss Lou she's my young mistis, an' hit's her gals whot I tellin' 'bout. Yer see, honey," here Aunt Becky laid a loving hand on the gray sleeve, "we'se de quality, we is. My ole Sambo's done bin eberywhar yer kin name; done bin' an' bin' an' bin', till tain't no tellin' whar dat nigger ain't bin ter. We's a stayin' now wid Sam's fus' wife's cousin, whot's name Miss Mandy Wilkins. Huh!" she grunted, "'tain't noboddy pestered 'bout gittin' may'd in Shekawgy. 'Pears lak Mis' Mandy Wilkins got de fo'fe man now, an' she's jes' a nigger. Dey tell me, here her voice sunk to a whisper, "dey tells me hit ain't no mo' trubble gitnin' on-hitched dan hitched in dishyere Shekawgy.

White folks cawntinually gittin' may'd an' den gittin' onmay'd. Sam he ses so. Wonner whar dat fool nigger? I sees him now."

Aunt Becky kept an eye out for Uncle Sam, and continued the family history.

"Miss Lou, she think a power o' me an' Sam. Yer see, honey, dis is de upshot ob hit all. I nussed Miss Lou when she's a tinchy li'l' baby-gal, an' Sam, he tuck keer o' Maws Jarn—dat's Miss Lou's pappy—when he was mortally shot indurin' o' de war."

But Aunt Becky don't tell of how, when the war was over, Uncle Sam worked harder for Mistis than when he was a slave, nor of her own toil in rearing a house full of little ones, Maws Jarn's death and the fortunes of war left so dependent. Uncle Sam was a peculiar character. He had lived an uneventful life and had once traveled with his master from Norfolk, Va., by way of New Orleans, to an Arkansaw plantation.

He was a loquacious, pleasant-faced, old man, uniformly polite and kind, and his round, black countenance shown with good-will to all.

The first twenty years of his life was spent on a cotton plantation in south Arkansaw. During the war, Uncle Sam, with hundreds of other slaves, was impressed into service by the Confederate government, and marched to Shreveport, La., and put on duty.

From this post he deserted and joined the Union forces under Gen. Banks, at Alexandria. A few weeks later he was destined to nurse his Confederate master in a federal hospital. Wounded unto death and a prisoner of war, the master breathed his last in Sambo's strong, young arms, dimly conscious of the tears of his slave upon his stiffening features. After the war Uncle Sam drifted back to the old home and nobly bore his part for "Mistis 'n' de chillen."

"Have you had a pleasant stay in Chicago?" asked the woman in gray, so pleased was she to find "Miss Lou's' faithful mammy."

"Um, um, um, yas'm, I spec we is. Miss Mandy Wilkin's mighty nice, an' simmiliar, but doe de eatin' don't set wid me, somehow ruther I ain't seed nuff hawg meat t' suit my tas'e. I is a mighty han' f' hawg 'n' homily. Lawd, honey, I ain't seed nair pot o' bacon an' greens sence her' I bin, an' we come las' Chewsd'y. Ef I could get a cup o' butter-milk, I could sorter make out."

"How did you happen to come!"

"Well, it's dish-a-way, honey; Miss Lou done gone t' Calyforny t' see her gals what's may'd out dar, and Maws Jack, dat's Miss Lou's boy what libs in Li'l Rock, he whirl in an' say: 'Mammy, is yer an' daiddy wantin' t' be gwine t' de Worl' F'ar 't Shekawgy?' an'

den he tu'ns in and up an' buy us de tickets to go an' come home, too; den Maws Jack laffs an' say: 'Spec my ole mammy lak some spondulik's'—Maws Jack mighty deblish—an' din he gib Sambo some money an' he put lots ob hit in my thanky-bag an' say: 'Don't lose yer money, mammy, an' look out f' dem pock-pickits' Yes'm, dat whot Maws Jack say. You ner dat nigger Sam gwine off 'dout me? I has t' keep up wid Sam, honey; folks git on-hitched powerful easy here in Shekawgy, dey tells me. Far'well, dawder; yee's a mighty likely white 'om'n."

The woman in gray smiled at the honest face, and, as she strolled away, the memory of Aunt Becky's words brought tears with the smiles; for only those who have known the affection of a black mammy, can understand or appreciate the generous and often self-sacrificing loyalty of this old-time blessing.

Later, while conversing with a friend, the woman in gray was seized by the shoulder, turned around to see—Aunt Becky in tears.

Why! What's the matter, Auntie?"

"Lawd, honey. Boo-boo-boo! I done—boo, los', boo, Sambo—an' wusser'n dat—Boo-ooo! done los' my thanky-bag—what—boo-oo Miss Lou done gib me. I was jes' a lookin' at dat curi's Injunny man whot gotty dugout done growd 'roun' he's wais' when I los'—boo—I

los' ole Sam an' dat thanky-bag what Miss Lou done gib her po' ole—boo—Mammy—wid all dem fo' bitsets whot Maws Jack done gimme, too!"

"Oh, never mind, we'll find it; don't cry, Auntie," the woman in gray said sympathetically.

"I ain't nebber 'spec'n t' see dat thanky-bag what Miss Lou—boo—boo—boo," she blubbered, "no mo', my Lawd an' Mawster! no mo'," she sobbed now hysterically.

"Oh, yes you will, don't cry."

"No mo', my Lawd, no mo'," like the wail of a lost soul.

"Yes, you will. Come, let's look for it."

"Lawd A'mighty! honey, deys sich a on-godly chance o' folks here—boo—boo. Worsh I'd a stayed at home—worshed I was 't home dis minit a feedin' dem plume o' de rock chickens—boo—worsh I was done drapt daid!"

"There is your husband, and he has your satchel. See?" cried the woman in gray.

Praise de good Lawd!" Aunt Becky shouted, as she rushed forward and seized the thanky-bag. 'Gillory! Gillory t' de Lam'! Sambo Vinegar, is yer had yer black paw in dis yere thanky-bag?" Say, ole man?"

"No!" roared Uncle Sam. "But let me tell yer, Becky, I's a ole man. I bin here an' I bin dar an' seed all sawts o' folks; but ob all

de oncomsponserble 'oman I eber did see, you sho' do tek de cake, an' dishyere las' caper do sho' tek de rag off'n de bush, hit do f' a fac'!"

"Nebber min', Sam, honey, doncher say nair wo'd. Les' go an' skeer up a watter-million somewhar. Niggers mighty han's f' millions—come nigh's possum an' taters a suitin' dishyere nigger lady's taste."

And they went their way.



THE CAMP ON FREQO.

IT WAS an afternoon of slumbrous sweetness in the heart of sunny June. The sound of the wood-chopper's axes rang harmoniously clear, and the tumbling melody of the swift flowing creek chanted a drowsy murmur through the ever-stirring leaves. Little need was there for the old-fashioned clock in the cabin in the clearing, for appetite dictated the time for meals.

There was quite a little settlement in the woods, for, after having their crops and fences twice swept away by both the May and June "rises," the farmers in Canaan could do nothing else save cut logs for saw mills to keep the wolf away. Down among the cypresses and pines great gnarled and moss-grown oaks with a tangle of canebrake and wild-flowers, mixed in delicious confusion with rattan, bamboo, yellow jasmine and woodbine that leaned over the water to admire its reflected beauty. Here were the Canaanites in camp and cabin, living as best they could. No one complained; indeed, each was grateful to find a way out of the disasters of the flood.

Sister Evans was the first to move, then came Sisters Beard and Amos—each family comfortably domiciled in camp or cabin. With her usual good nature, Sister Amos was inclined to view the whole as a joke, “jest plum like a big camp meetin’,” she confided to Sister Beard. Sister Mackey brought her spinning wheel, “so’s pap needn’t git bar’ f’ socks f’ want o’ a little knittin’ thread.”

When the camp fire faded and left nothing of its glories but a bed of red and black coals, the women sat in its wavering glow and talked. All enjoyed the novelty, and when the moon rose orange-colored from behind the big trees, and scattered its sheen of light over the creek, the cabins and dense forest, Sister Broadnax declared she “had never hoped to see anything in Arkansaw so beautiful.”

“Ef ye’re talkin’ ’bout moonshine, yer jes’ oughter see the Georgy moon. This moon way out here don’t know the fust princerples o’ shinin’,” Sister Mackey said, with her nose full of tobacco smoke.

The monotony of the days was never tiresome, for Sister Mackey spun “truck f’ pap’s socks.” Sister Evans “pieced” quilts, while Sisters Amos and Broadnax went fishing—listening with attentive ears to nature’s many voices as they rambled up or down the creek. Sister Beard, too, was fond of the woods, and

often spent hours searching for her favorite wood-violets among the ferns, now and then singing snatches of her old time hymns or repeating to her gathered flowers half-whispered words of admiration and appreciation. The larger part of every life is an open page, we are constantly making involuntary revelations of our characters, and Sister Beard showed her sweet, simple faith in every act of her life.

"Ain't Sister Beard the best woman in Canaan?" Sister Evans asked Sister Broadnax, as they sat on the bank of F'reo creek, waiting for a bite from the artful dodgers in the muddy water.

So good. Sometimes I think I never knew as pure a woman. 'Of such is the kingdom,' " quoted Sister Brodnax.

"I call that big luck! Look what a big shiny feller!" Sister Amos exclaimed, casting a fine speckled perch within an uncomfortable nearness to Sister Brodnax's nose just as she landed a big "cat."

"Havin' any luck?" Sister Mackey's rasping voice called from the bushes back of them.

"The wind blows too much f' good fishin'," Sister Amos remarked, remorselessly, baiting her hook with a squirming worm.

"Hit would be jes' plum awful t' have a harrykin light down on us in this 'ere timber," Sister Mackey remarked, carefully brushing off

a log with her apron before seating herself. The blue-and-white-knitting was held affectionately to her bosom, and the round fat ball of thread reposed in her apron pocket. "I ain't seed a sho'nough generwine river ner creek since I lef' Georgy. Them's what yer mought *call* rivers thar. There's the Chatty-hoochy—I seed hit 't C'lumbus—an' ergin, thar's—great King David!" Sister Mackey jumped with surprising agility from the log, a tiny snake wriggled close to her elbow, as she meditatively gazed across the creek, smoking her pipe, and living again in "Georgy." "Yer sassy varmint! A lickin' out yer tongue t' yer betters. I ain't no sorter doctor." She threw a stick in the direction of the snake and struck Sister Amos' sunbonnet.

"'Tain't nothin' but a gyarter snake, no-how," Sister Amos said, as she arose.

"Let's go, the wind is too strong," Sister Brodnax suggested, "we have enough for dinner, haven't we?"

"'Tain't much in this worl' I'm skeered of," Sister Mackey remarked, when they were walking toward the camp; "but I'll tell yer, a stawm in this timber 'd be jes' plum pitterful. Yer hear me!"

"I ain't never seed a stawm," Sister Amos remarked.

“Well, we useter have ’em in Georgy—fus’ class harrykins—Lawd-a-massy! Hit’s jes’ tarryfyin’.”

“Were you ever in one?”

“Not aigsackly smack-dab in a harrykin, but jes’ b’low papy’s hit blow’d scan’lus. Ole Sister Grubbs, what lived in thar aige o’ our settlement, told my pappy es how that harrykin jes’ nachelly turned her big washpot inside out.”

“Woo-oo-e-e!”, cried Sister Amos, “that’s the biggest one you ever *did* tell, Sister Mackey!”

“La, Sister Mackey! What a whopper!”

“Well, yer can name it es yer please. Sister Grubbs was a chu’ch ’oman, an’ nobody could come in a mile o’ her a prayin’ an’ singin’ an’ talkin’ t’ ther mourners’ meetin’ times, an’, when they come th’oo, Sister Grubbs was ther fus’ man t’ rise an’ he’p ’em shout an’ caper ’roun’. Yes, sir, that washpot was sholy inside out, f’ *pappy seed it*.”

“That’s wonderful. What did he say about it?” Sister Brodnax asked, with a smile.

“Well, pappy he ’low’d hit was a pow’ful curi’s thing. Hit made the pot mighty ill-convenient, with ther years and laigs on ther inside ther pot.”

“Gre’t Simon Peter!” Sister Evans cried. “Sister Mackey, let up! Let up!”

"I worsh I may drap plum daid in my tracks ef it ain't so!" Sister Mackey said, waving "pap's sock" excitedly.

"That worshopot was inside out—the laigs an' ther years a-poppin' up inside ther pot with a plum nachel look to em!"

"'Thar's our men folks done come. I bet a mule my brade's done burnt up to a coal." Sister Amos hastened forward.

"Yer brade's all right, Tildy, go an' fix Dick's dinner," Sister Beard advised.

"Gre't King David! What's yer meanin,' pap? Go right straight in that house an' shuck them new britches, quick!" Sister Mackey commanded, with energy.

"A-puttin' on yer Sunday britches here in the middle o' ther week! Ther ain't nair soul here what keers a cent 'bout yer britches. Go put on them yeller jeans, whot yer been a-w'arin'."

Poor old Pap! He looked down upon his blue-clad spindles in uncertain misery. To go or not to go was the question, and when he glanced at the pity in Sister Broadnax's brown eyes—caught a compassionate sympathy from Sister Beard's eyes of faded blue, he decided the majority should rule; he would keep his blue trousers on.

A mischievous twinkle in Sister Amos' wide-awake face, as she stood near her broad-

shouldered hero, half warned him, and a fleeting, frightened look at the gaunt figure of his wife, who held the ever-lasting knitting at half-mast, finally decided him; he turned slowly and went into a cabin. All Sister Mackey's training was of small avail. "Pap" still hugged to his craven soul an unreasonable conceit. A poor, self-satisfied ideality, a species of conceit as inherent and necessary in the make-up of some men as the breath of life. "Pap" was a poor, subdued peacock, and but for the careful attention given to the "cotton-topping" process by his grim, uncompromising spouse, he would never have enjoyed "meetin'," and the extent of his vanity would have broken his heart; for "bein' a perfesser a-settin' in the amen cawner" in the Canaan meetin' house was incompatible with "yaller jeen's britches an' them patched." All this and more Sister Mackey had vainly striven to impress upon him, her keen insight into, and her judgments—untempered by mercy—upon his weak, shallow character came nearer the absolute truth than researches in divinity, mathematics or medicine.

"Don't that take the cake?" Sister Amos asked her husband when Sister Mackey had followed "Pap" into the cabin; "I b'lieve I'll try that on you, Dick," she laughed.

"Don't," he replied; "le's have dinner."

"Look at that po' old sheep," Sister Amos whispered, when Sister Mackey led "Pap" to the long table under the trees.

"Come roun' here, Sister Mackey, you, too, 'Squar'," Sister Beard called from her place at the other side.

"We do fus' trate down here. I like it—jes' like a fish-fry all the time," Sister Amos said, as they enjoyed the dinner of early vegetables and fish.

"Tildy ain't got no mo' sense 'n 't have a good time anywhar; jes' nachelly thankful f' nothin'," Sister Mackey observed.

"That's the way t' be," Sister Beard modestly asserted.

"Taint no sense in it."

"Lot's of sense an' mo' satisfaction. Tildy's jes' what I want her," declared Dick Amos. "I'm so plum satisfied with Tildy's laughin' ways that ever' time I see a man with a still, snurly, quarrelin' wife, I'm jes' sorry f' him an' glad f' myself."

"La, Dick, how you do run on," Sister Beard said.

"Huh!" Sister Mackey grunted, her nose in the air, "yer need yer cotton topped, Dick Amos. Sorry cause ever' woman ain't a fool like Tildy Amos! Who ever heerd o' sich! I lay thar's lots o' men jes' as sorry f' you havin' sich a wife es Tildy."

"My wife suits me, an' I ain't sorry f' Dick, nuther," said Brother Evans, rising from the table.

"Sister Ivins' mighty nigh es foolish es Tildy."

"She's all right," Brother Evans laughed.

"For my part I nuver heerd o' *anybody* bein' sorry f' Dick, did yer, 'Squar'?"

"'Squar'" Mackey lifted his bullet head and glanced quickly at his wife.

"Yer sorry f' Dick Amos, 'Squar'?"

"*No, I aint,*" squeaked the "'Squar'," watching his chance when Sister Mackey talked with Sister Broadnax and didn't hear.

After a clearing away of the table, a quiet rest under the trees, a lulling to sleep of the children, the "Sisters" again began to talk more generally. Sister Amos lay half asleep beside little Tom, but Sister Evans resumed her sewing, and Sister Mackey lighted that odorous pipe, and began an attack on "Pap's" everlasting sock.

"Some folks ain't got no raisin'," she said, with a scornful look at Sister Amos, scarcely realizing that she herself was lacking, and that she hourly proclaimed a neglect of early training by ruthlessly ignoring the written or conceded laws of every-day life. In being cynical she was necessarily uncharitable and boldly advertised the misfortune of having been

reared outside the pale of beauty, love and peace. The other women in the camp on Freo pitied Sister Mackey; for, in spite of herself, she told the world just what she was. There is, indeed, no evil lurking in the soul that does not leave its impress on the face, and an unpleasant temper defaces the most exquisitely chiseled countenance.

"Going to sleep, Tildy?" the rasping voice grated harshly.

"Come in one of it—was jes' a dozin'."

"Hit 'pears like thar's some folk's as don't know when they's too lazy t' die,"

"Oh, I'm a gettin' well down hyar," laughed Sister Amos. "I've got no notion o' 'leavin' Dick—he'd be all broke up, 'thout me," with another laugh.

"You do look better," Sister Brodnax said encouragingly.

"Tildy's a heap better—she's gettin' rale rosy ergin," Sister Beard declared.

"Didn't know yer'd stop yer devilment long 'nough t' git sick," Sister Mackey snarled.

"Better send her into Georgy," Sister Amos telegraphed to Sister Evans.

"I ain't fish one minit an' fowl the naixt. I'm myse'f, me! Sister Mackey!"

Oh, Sister Mackey! No need of advertising yourself. There is no balancing on a natural pivot between right and wrong—good and evil. They all knew you, alas, too well.

"Les' go down on the creek, Tildy," Sister Evans proposed, carefully putting away her work.

"To burn mo' daylight?" again snarled that human cat known as Sister Mackey.

"Yes," Sister Beard said, "go on, I'll take care of Tom."

"I nachelly love the woods, somehow I can git closeter t' the Lawd down here," Sister Amos confessed as she walked towards the creek with Sister Evans.

"Yes, so do I, Tildy."

A life in the woods *did* bring them close to nature, and was restful beyond that of any cure or sanitarium—where artificialities, vexations, fashions and nerves dropped away like snow before the sun, and all was sweet, reposeful quiet.

"I thought I'd find yer here," came the unwelcome voice of Sister Mackey, as, an hour later, she stole into the little glen as stealthily as came the serpent into Eden.

"I lay yer never had no sich trees es these in Georgy," Sister Amos said, banteringly.

Sister Mackey sank upon the grass and waved her knitting; a faint little grin contorted her shrewd, thin lips. She gazed meditatively across the creek into a tangled confusion of cypress knees, canes and creepers, thinking—thinking—thinking of that far away Beulah land she knew as "Georgy."

“As a glimpse of a burnt out ember
Recalls a regret of the sun,”

so her narrow mind held as richest treasures the memory of that enchanted land, and, as the fleeting years added their veiling mists, the memories grew more definite and precious.

“Trees?” she asked, rousing out of her reverie, “these ain’t no trees, they’s saplin’s. Trees grows in Georgy.”

“I ’low’d these was trees; they’re big es all creation,” laughed Sister Evans.

“How big’s Georgy trees, Sister Mackey?” Sister Amos gravely inquired.

“Pappy knowed a man in ther pine lan’s what had the biggest saw mill in Georgy, an’ hit tuck that mill six months t’ saw up one tree!”

“Gre’t Simon Peter!”

“That was a generwine tree, fer a fac’,” Sister Amos cried, with uplifted hands.

“How many houses did it build?”

“Hit built a whole town, ’sides three mills an’ a gin house or so. Pappy know’d a preacher what hilt meetin’ in ther holler of a tree, an’ when ther mourners wouldn’t come th’oo time they orter he’d jes’ snatch ’em up off’n ther knees an’ stick ’em up in that holler an’ smoke ’em out same es rabbits.”

“Whoo-oo-ee!” from Sister Amos.

“What sort o’ tree was it?”

"A big pine," Sister Mackey calmly answered.

"I never heerd of a holler pine—not in all my bawn days!" Sister Amos said.

"Yer got *nothin'* in Arkinsaw, Tildy; not so much es folks er trees. Holler pines is common es babies in Georgy," and then she smoked that vile little pipe.



AN INFALLIBLE RECIPE FOR GOSSIPS.

SISTER BEARD was "pestered." For several weeks a quarrel and a scandal had been brewing in Canaan, and though she had tried hard not to "take sides," she felt in her soul a leaning for the right, and was fearful lest she might have so expressed herself—if not by words, by manner—fearful that in her zeal a bad matter might be made worse. She took it terribly to heart, thought of it day and night until her sensitive soul became morbid on the subject; and, as to-day was the appointed one to spend with Sister Evans, she mounted her sleek little horse and started. She carried a basket filled with some delicacy for her neighbor, and from her saddle hung a large, worn satchel containing her work.

Through the rosy summer light she saw, as she ambled along the broad fields of green, dotted thickly over with vivid dashes of white of the opening cotton bolls and the deep ditches on either side of the high, straight fences, waved fervid green with ferns and a confusion of sweet, uncultured things blooming and bending odorously, the fresh morning air was aquiver with the sleepy hum of insects and carol of birds.

Sister Beard was "too pestered" to appreciate it all. She felt ashamed of herself. For two weeks she had wondered if she *had said* anything, and had all this time borne the nerve-racking strain on heart and brain, and now felt herself giving down like a child.

The busy days, with their monotonous round of duties, were easily spent; but the nights were telling on her strength—the long, pitiless nights when she had only her forebodings for company.

The white strip of moonlight, which carpeted her floor from window to door, seemed, to her tortured imagination, the trail of a great white serpent, a hissing, gossiping serpent.

The summer-scented breeze, that had gently lifted the muslin curtain and stole in to comfort Sister Beard, failed to accomplish its mission, for she was "too pestered" to appreciate the kindness. Her quick, tender conscience was ever on the alert and kept a perpetual uncompromising guard over her soul, for the uncultured are not so skilled in blotting out their own transgressions as are the more educated hypocrites. She found quite a little company assembled in Sister Evans' large front room.

Sister Mackey sat near a window knitting on the eternal blue-and-white sock; from year to year that blue-and-white work never varied,

was never finished, and Sister Mackey was wont to boast that "that 'ere yaller chist in the loft was plum' full o' bran new socks f' pap." She "wasn't 'lowin' t' have pap t' go without socks, jes' plain, b'ar-leggeddy, when the ole 'oman draps off."

Sister Brodnax was there, too, rocking and knitting lace for some of her numerous pets, for Sister Brodnax's heart was a capacious organ and took in all the little girls in Canaan. Sister Amos was piecing a quilt and all were talking pleasantly.

"No, ma'am, I don't see no use," Sister Amos said in reply to a criticism from Sister Mackey. "I never could see no use in a cuttin' up caliker in sich little scrops jes' t' sew 'em together agin."

"Hit would be lots purtier, yer scrops is too big f' a nine-patch, Tildy."

"Hit's too tejis like, it is," Sister Amos laughed.

"Look, Sister Brodnax, ain't they too big?" Sister Mackey persisted.

"Why, no, not if she likes them that size," smiling over her glasses at a dear little girl who leaned on her lap while taking an inventory of Sister Brodnax's apron pocket. As she smiled lovingly on the child she thought of another pair of dewy, blue eyes closed in eternal sleep so many years ago—another bright, blonde

head laid low in the graveyard clay. She looked indulgently upon the dirty little fist closed upon thimble and thread in her pocket, and it was the memory of another pair of chubby hands that made Sister Brodnax so unselfishly patient with "the least of these" bright earth-blossoms.

"Now," Sister Evans said, seating her portly figure on a trunk, "now, we are goin' t' have a rale good day an' not say nair word ag'in noboddy; ain't we?"

"Of course we are," Sister Brodnax agreed.

"We haint nothin' t' say ag'in nobody, leastwise *I* ain't," Sister Beard remarked, her soul a-tremble.

"Ef the Lawd 'll put up with me, I promise t' put up with ev'ry body else," Sister Amos said, with a wink at Sister Evans.

"Ez f' *me*," Sister Mackey said with emphasis, "ef I've got anything t' say I 'spec' t' spit it out; that's *me*, all over."

"But when we don't know nothin' t' say we *cain't* say it; what then?" Sister Evans asked, descending from the trunk with a grunt.

"Make it," suggested the giddy Sister Amos, with another wink.

"La, Tildy!" Sister Beard mildly remonstrated.

"I know folks, not a hundred miles away, that can do that mighty slick. Ain't that Puss Kemp a gallivantin' off ergin? Sich a gad about I never seed!" Sister Mackey cried from the window.

The girl on horseback turned her head, but said nothing, and hurried her horse along.

"Better git Sister Mackey into Georgy ef yer don't want t' hear all that mess on po' Puss ag'in," Sister Amos whispered to Sister Evans.

"How is your mother, Puss?" Sister Brodnax called from the gallery.

"No better, mighty po'ly—goin' after the doctor now," was the answer as she hastened onward.

"Puss has a hard time," Sister Brodnax said, coming back to her chair.

"She is mother and father and everything else to those children at home."

"Whar's Mis Kemp, I'd like to know?" demanded Sister Mackey with fire in her eyes.

"La, Sister Mackey! Mis Kemp haint walked a step in mor'n a year."

"Laziness?"

"No'm; rheumatiz," Sister Beard responded meekly.

Sister Amos tittered, Sister Brodnax looked half amused, half reproachful, and Sister Beard said, with a sigh, "La, Tildy?"

Sister Mackey glanced around the room, her belligerent nature firing with wrath. "I

ain't no Judas!" she proudly announced. "When I know a thing, I've got the backbone t' say my c'nvictions. Nobody ever seen Sister Mackey a whuppin' the devil 'roun' the stump. *No, sir!* An' whot's mo', I *know* what I *know*."

"Better git her into Georgy, quick," Sister Amos again whispered.

"Try it," advised Sister Evans.

"La, me! This is the kuis' color! Hit ain't nuther pink-red ner-yaller buff—looks like 'simmon beer. Ever see 'simmon beer, Sister Mackey?" Sister Amos innocently asked, holding up a piece of calico.

"Is I seed 'simmon beer? bar'ls an' bar'ls of it? My pap uster make it t' drink like water."

"She's in Georgy—Puss Kemp's safe," Sister Amos telegraphed to Sister Evans. There was a mischievous twinkle in Sister Amos' blue eyes when she put Sister Brodnax's work, which she had pretended to examine, back on her lap.

"I ain't no Judas. Judases is the snakyis' folks on the green arth. No Judas speerit in *me!*" Sister Mackey was not so easily beguiled.

"How do they make 'simmon beer? We've got a patch o' trees right closte t' the gyardin an' I want t' know," Sister Evans said:

"I'll tell yer in time," Sister Mackey assured her. "Did yer all hear that awful tale 'bout—"

"Blue an' green don't go good side an' side, does they?" Sister Amos interrupted, carefully matching her blocks of patchwork.

"Lis'n 't Tildy Amos!" Sister Mackey said, scornfully, "a pretendin' t' look 't that trimmin' o' Sister Brodnax, an' I bet she's a sayin' som'thin' she had no 'scasion t' say." Sister Mackey's high nose rose even higher as she sniffed a dainty morsel of the forbidden topic.

"Sister Mosely had a nine-patch what was bigger'n this," Sister Amos said naively, "an' hit was purty, too," holding up a square for inspection.

"That's rale nice; looks sorter like I'sh-chain," Sister Evans said, as she sat in the back door and "snapped" the beans, while Sister Beard shelled green peas for dinner.

"I've seen beautiful quilts made double Irish-chain," Sister Brodnax remarked, thinking of the good old times in Alabama.

Sister Mackey came in from the kitchen, where she had lighted her pipe.

"Did you ever see a double I'sh-chain quilt, Sister Mackey?" Sister Amos inquired, with renewed hope of "startin' her to Georgy."

"Lot o' 'em. One ole widder a livin' nigh pappy's had piles and stacks o' bed quilts."

Sisters Amos, Evans, Beard and Brodnax breathed easily. Perhaps after all, the discussion of the neighborhood scandal might be averted.

"I've seen the lone stair pattron," Sister Amos ventured.

"Lone stair's common's pig tracks; the Mason's secret an' Oddfeller's delight is the purtyes' things f' quilts I ever clapped my eyes on." Sister Mackey was now in high good humor.

"Hit's all laid work—pow'ful pertickler work—ev'ry stitch a-settin' f' hitse'f," Sister Mackey said, between puffs of vile tobacco smoke.

"I couldn't begin t' name the pattrons. Thar's the moanin' dove an' the twin lam's, an' the goodnis knows what all. I have t' laugh ever' time I thinks 'bout quilts, f' then I git to thinkin' 'bout Mis' Smith what lived back in Georgy. She had three mighty purty gals—Susy an' Mary an' Ann. Susy had two swee'arts in love with her at onct."

"How did she manage 'em?" puffing contentedly.

"Fus' rate. One was Josiah Tuttle, a long, lanky, ugly critter. He was a ex'orter in the church an' come mighty nigh a preachin', too, campmeetin' times; an' 't big meetin's, too. Jes' stan' Josiah up thar 'mongst the

mourners an' he was a chawin' glory from way-back, speshally ef Susy was a mourner."

"What difference did that make?" Sister Beard was shocked.

"Mis' Smith didn't take t' Josiah an' Susy did, an' her bein' a mourner give him a chance t' talk t' her."

"I declare!" exclaimed Sister Brodnax.

"Hit's the truth jes' like I tell yer. Hit took Susy the longest time t' come through of any mourner in the settlement. Hit jes' 'peared like her heart was a plum' rock, an' black as a nigger with sin. Ever'body was a talkin' it, that po' Susy Smith was the hardest sinner that ever lived; she was so long a-seekin'."

Sister Mackey's hard, old countenance still were a vague, little, sick grin, and only an intimate acquaintance could have decided whether it was an indication of pain or pleasure.

"Well?" Sister Brodnax said, interrogatively.

"Atter Josiah went up t' 'Mericus t' his aunt's, Susy 'jes lit in t' dancin' an' singin' reels an' goin' t' play-parties same's before. That t'other feller had a chance then. His name was Sam Short, an' f' a joke the gals uster call him Short Sam; he hauled for a livin', er driv, er som'thin' o' that sort. When Christmas come, Susy went all 'roun' an' ast folks t' her weddin'. Nobody know'd who it

was she's goin' t' marry, but ever'body know'd in reason hit's Sam Short er Josiah Tuttle. Susy was the devilishest young fool, jes' like all gals, an' some don't git over their devilment attar they marry nuther," with a glance at Sister Amos.

"Tell on," meekly, Sister Amos spoke.

"The day fo' Christmas up driv Sam Short an' whilst they's eatin' supper in steps Josiah Tuttle hisse'f, big es life. Sam was as full o' devilment as Josiah's full o' religion, but Mis Smith was hard to fool, all the time she's a seein' thro Josiah's pious streak. That night both them sweet'arts o' Susy's went back in the side room t' sleep. Josiah draw'd his bible an' commenced t' read 'loud all 'bout Moses an' the 'Gypsians. Sam he stood it purty well 'till Josiah bawled out a singing 'Come, 'umble sinner' an' Sam ast him t' shet up so's he could git t' sleep; but Josiah kep' a bawlin' an' Sam turned over an' snored an' snawted scan'lus loud. Josiah sings an' bawls louder, an' Sam keep up with his snorin' an' snawtin'. Attar while Mis Smith—"

"Come in to dinner." Sister Evans stood in the door waiting.

"You must finish after dinner," Sister Brodnax said, with a persuasive smile.

Sister Mackey was first to respond.

"Jes keep her in the State o' Georgy two hours longer an' we won't hear a word of—"

"Hush !" warned Sister Brodnax, as they, too, followed, "I must go and see Sister Kemp after dinner," Sister Brodnax said.

"I will go with you, will you let me ?" laughed Sister Amos.

An hour later the little party were again seated in the front room, each afraid of Sister Mackey's investigative disposition.

Sister Brodnax suggested, in her pleasant way, that the story be continued.

"Yes, tell about Susy's sweet'arts," hoping to keep Sister Mackey in the "State of Georgy" for Arkansaw did not seem to agree with her.

"Well," she began, reflectively, smoking her pipe, "Mis Smith heerd the racket an' went an' knocked on the door an' ast 'what's the matter?' Sam he hollered 'it's Josiah bawlin'; then Josiah he hollered 'Sam's a snorin'. Well, atter a while they all went to sleep and Josiah he pertends t' be sleep too, an' a dreamin' he's a exhortin' at a big meetin', he bangs Sam over the head with his fist an' tells him 't' come out on the Lawd's side;' then lams away ag'in. Then Sam riz an' give him the awfullest beatin' a man ever toted; he laid right thar in that bed six weeks gittin' well o' that maulin'."

"Which did she marry?"

"Nair one. Susy marr'd a one-eyed pedlar naix day. She laughed fit t' kill herse'f 'bout Sam a beatin' Josiah up so bad."

“Well, I must go see 'bout Sister Kemp,” Sister Amos said, folding up her work, “Come go with me,” when Sisters Beard and Brodnax had made their adieux.

“Now, you see how it is,” Sister Amos said, as the three walked down the sandy road leading to Mrs. Kemp’s.

“All Sister Mackey needs is to be kep’ in the State o’ Georgy.”

“La, Tildy!”

“Hit’s so, an’ then there’s no harm done or said.”

“After this, when she branches off on somebody’s character jes set her over in Georgy among the ’simmon trees an’ bed quilts an’ she’s harmless es well es happy,” Sister Amos said earnestly.

“That’s so,” smiled Sister Brodnax.

“Then keep her in Georgy.”

“We will,” Sister Beard solemnly promised.



MRS. SMITH.

THE rain came down as if the floodgates of heaven were open, and even the bright gossip of my lively little neighbor, who had "dropped in" early, failed to dispel the gloom of damp-laden air and lowering, leaden skies.

"There they have been these eight months!" Mrs. Shaw was saying, "and we know no more of them than if they lived in Africa. I wonder why they ever came to Greenbriar? 'Live in their own house?' Of course they do, and a beautiful price they paid for it, too."

Mrs. Shaw stopped for sheer want of breath, but again taking heart, began:

"'Delicate!' not a bit of it! 'Literary?' Perhaps," Mrs. Shaw said doubtfully. "One thing is sure, *I* shall never go there again. The idea of that queer looking old woman saying with her high-and-mighty air, 'My mistress does not see strangers, please excuse.' Every one else who has gone gets the same answer. I don't understand. 'My mistress' had better stayed away from Greenbriar."

Ah, Mrs. Shaw!

All attempts to "pump" the little six-year-old girl or the close-mouthed man-servant were

futile, and Mrs. Smith remained mistress of the situation. She attended services at the little church once a week with the little girl; went driving or walking, but never went visiting. She dressed plainly but elegantly, and Greenbriar was on tiptoe to know more about her.

"The Willows," a handsome old house, with extensive grounds, had been purchased and set in order weeks before Mrs. Smith's advent, and upon taking possession, they had arrived in the night, so no one knew how many of the Smith family, except Mrs. Smith, the little girl and the two servants, lived at The Willows. Each inhabitant of the village of Greenbriar had his or her theory regarding the Smith's. One thought *she* was a widow; another felt that she was an old maid—she was so demure; another *knew* she was a deserted wife, and still another vetoed the idea of her being a widow because "she wasn't frisky enough." No one could guess her age—she was neither young nor old. Sometimes her hair was reported blonde and again it was sworn to be as dark as a raven's wing.

The minister at last made bold to call at The Willows. The same stony face, with its framing of white hair, startled him, the same words from "my mistress" were spoken, with "for the church" added, as she gave him a

sealed envelope. Bye and bye, as time flew on, gossips sought more inviting, better-paying subjects than the Smiths of The Willows. Some one has written, "A woman's mind is a curious thing, like an old gothic castle, full of turnings and windings, long, dark passages, spiral staircases and secret corners. Among these architectural involutions her ideas go wandering about very much at random; often they go tripping gaily along when a door opens and in comes another idea which turns the first one back and then blows the light out."

But Mrs. Shaw's idea seemed never to lose itself; no matter how intricate the mazes of its entanglement among other subjects, the one hope and object of her life now seemed hedged about with Smiths. She thought Smiths, dreamed Smiths, and the few quiet moments of her days were devoted to speculations of the Smiths of The Willows. Mrs. Shaw's interest never wavered, and though she was warned by a playful friend that "curiosity once killed a cat," she persistently pursued her investigations, her advantage lay in living near The Willows, and as her location was higher, she saw much more than the average citizen.

"There's somebody sick at 'The Willows!'" she exclaimed, breathlessly, about a year after Greenbriar had settled down to a pleasant quiescence on the Smith question. "How do I

know, indeed!" I saw him, the old man was rolling him 'round in an invalid's chair. If I could find Tom's old field-glasses that he used during the war, I could see better—everything, in fact, from the garret window." Mrs. Shaw was in an excited state when she left.

Later, the same friend who had warned her of the fate of the cat, came by, bearing a pair of old-fashioned field-glasses. "Won't she be in clover? I am taking Tom Shaw's old glasses home to aid and abet his wife in attending to other people's affairs," and with a laugh Mrs. Sallie Kirk went her way.

"What *do* you think!" Mrs. Shaw burst in next morning, "would you believe that that saintly-looking Mrs. Smith actually has a *prisoner* at The Willows?"

"Nonsense!"

"No nonsense about it! I saw it all as plainly as I see you. His hands were strapped down to the arms of the chair. Oh, it's horrible!"

Mrs. Shaw's pretty face was in a thousand wrinkles when she gave this bit of news, and her inquisitive black eyes had an I-told-you-so expression as she shook her head, knowingly, and went on, "Sallie Kirk brought Tom's old field-glasses home yesterday—a perfect God-send—for I didn't know where they were, and I need them so much just now."

A recollection of Mrs. Kirk's remarks brought an involuntary laugh.

"I can't see anything amusing in The Willows' people. For *my* part, I think they are *awful*, perfectly *shameful*!"

"What's the latest?" Mrs. Kirk, who had stolen in unobserved, inquired.

"Oh, Sallie! It's shocking the way things are going on at The Willows! Perfectly *awful*!"

"Mrs. Kirk's fun-loving soul almost bubbled over; she dared not look up, but carefully examined a bit of fancy work on the table.

"Well, what is it?" she managed to ask.

"That saintly, sweet, angelic Mrs. Smith actually has a poor, blind prisoner at The Willows—strapped down in a chair! Think of it, Sallie!"

"Going to electrocute him?"

"Worse than that; a living death is worse than a—than—"

"A very dead death," Mrs. Kirk supplied with a smothered giggle.

"Good morning! What are you three discussing so earnestly you did not hear me rap?"

Ah, Mrs. Sly! Your name is legion! Now the circle was complete, for what Mrs. Shaw's fertile imagination lacked Mrs. Sly's inventive genius made up a thousand fold.

"What were you talking about?"

"Those heathens at The Willows," Mrs. Shaw replied with a shiver of disgust.

"Any of 'em dead?"

"They had better be. That poor man tied hard and fast in a chair, screaming at the top of his voice for mercy. It's the most terrible affair Greenbriar ever knew!"

"Good King David!" exclaimed Mrs. Sly, putting on her glasses. "Why, honey, that's *awful!* Who is he?"

"I don't know; but you never heard of such goings on."

"She wouldn't exchange that for a Thanksgiving dinner," *soto voce* from Sallie Kirk.

"If you could see what *I* saw yesterday," continued Mrs. Shaw, "you *would* say it was awful."

"The story grows apace," whispered Sallie Kirk; "it expands with every telling. She will electrocute every blessed Smith in another hour, without judge or jury."

Mrs. Shaw and Mrs. Sly sat very near each other in the bow window. Mrs. Kirk sat near me at the table. "Listen, the story grows wondrous strange," she whispered.

"You wouldn't believe a woman *could* be so cruel," Mrs. Shaw was saying, "but that woman seems to fairly *gloat* over his misery; she walked by that chair and laughed, yes, *laughed* at the sufferings of that poor, dear, old man."

"Did you see his face?" Mrs. Sly asked.

"No, not exactly. She held an umbrella over him, and the man pushed the chair, and she kept the umbrella turned towards my house. Oh, he suffered terribly!"

"Ice cream and strawberries—not to be thought of—no swap there," again whispered Sallie Kirk.

"It's a shame, a perfect scandal!" from Mrs. Sly.

"Of course it is. The idea of that poor, pitiful thing being strapped down in that chair! I never heard of the like, did you?"

"Never!" Mrs. Sly asserted with truth.

An hour later Mrs. Shaw had advertised the news over one end of Greenbriar, while Mrs. Sly told more than she knew from house to house. Every telling more horrible and more hair-raising than the preceding. Within a week the whole country rang with the shame of the story. The local newspaper took up the theme under startling headlines, and the editor, in sweet consideration, sent a copy to The Willows. Every wife told her husband—as women will do—and they, poor things, forgetting their manhood, stood on the post-office corner and talked scandal by the hour.

For several months nothing was done toward clearing up the mystery of The Willows. The only native of Greenbriar who was innocent in thought or mood toward the Smiths was

a little blind boy, whose chief pleasure was in feeding his pet hens and piping in childish treble his one song :

“Mr. Coon has got a bushy tail,
Mr. 'Possnm's tail is bare,
Mr. Rabbit's got no tail at all,
'Cept'n a little bunch o' hair!”

In the midst of all, Mrs. Smith attended church regularly, went driving or walking with her little girl, and made no sign of a consciousness of having disturbed the peace or of being the subject of such anxious thought of her neighbors. At last the minister, blinded by a mistaken sense of duty and zeal withal, ventured once more to invade the privacy of The Willows.

The grounds were spacious, and well kept and as the good man did not belong to the Peter Bell family, he strolled about the beautiful grounds surrounding the castle-like dwelling, admiring the prodigality of shrubs and flowers, until he saw, under a tree, the party about whom all Greenbriar wondered. Mrs. Smith arose from her garden chair when the minister approached, and bade him welcome. In a wheeled chair near by sat a contented looking old woman, whose hair gleamed white under a dainty lace cap.

“My grandmother,” Mrs. Smith said, smilingly.

"And this," presenting the little girl. "is my orphan niece. We are all that are left of a large family."

The minister was amazed at her ease and grace.

"Did you know—" he began, but embarrassment shut off his words.

"Oh!" Mrs. Smith laughed, "did I know all; all that has been said of us? I hope so, for, verily, enough has already reached me."

The grandmother joined in the laugh, which but added to the visitor's misery.

It has amused me greatly; in fact, it has really been our only amusement since coming to The Willows," Mrs. Smith assured him.

"But—"

"'Curiosity killed a cat,' you have, no doubt, heard. I heard that the town of Greenbriar was the queen of gossips only after I had bought The Willows; but I came here for rest and quiet—for my grandmother especially, and have been thus far practically successful in enjoying an ideal peace. We are busy every day studying, teaching, and enjoying each other," Mrs. Smith explained.

"I am the reported victim," the grandmother remarked, with a twinkle in her faded eyes."

"Of paralysis yes—but not of electricity," Mrs. Smith laughed.

"Upon my word!" gasped the minister, unable still to grasp the absurdity of the whole story.

"She's up in that window again," the little girl spoke for the first time, glancing up at the house across the road.

"She enjoys it, leave her alone, dear. I am always pleased to have people enjoy themselves," Mrs. Smith added.

Across the way—away up in a garret window—Mrs. Shaw was making observations with "Tom's field-glasses."

"I should not have lived so exclusively, perhaps, had I not heard so much of the gossiping proclivities of this town, and as even my mail matter is criticised, my uprisings and my sittings down noted, and reported maliciously incorrect I am now more firmly resolved than ever before to hold no manner of intercourse with these Greenbriar people," Mrs. Smith declared.

"I will correct—" the minister began.

"Do not, I beg of you, for as long as I am the target some one else is spared; so leave them alone. 'Ephriam is joined to his idols.'"

"There are some good people here.'"

"I dare say. Their impossible stories indicate genius, at least. I have neither time nor inclination for winnowing the wheat from the chaff."

Mrs. Smith evidently meant what she said ; though her brown eyes shown with amusement, and smiles chased each other over her handsome, high-bred face. The minister rose to depart.

“I am pleased that you called to-day, but do not trouble yourself to explain my position. If I associated with these people I should find peaceful quiet a fleet Atalanta, and content a myth.”

Mrs. Smith was “having it out” with the minister—with that get-even-with-you propensity inherent in women long before the oak, against which she leaned, was a sleeping germ in a rusty acorn cup.

Every day, for ten consecutive days after the minister’s visit a stream of visitors poured into the gates of The Willows lawn, only to be stopped at the small inner gate behind which a big dog barked warningly. For once perseverance failed to prove a success, and the town of Greenbriar gave the Smiths up as incomprehensible. “Tom’s field-glasses” were once more relegated to oblivion’s dust, and the gossips sought fresh victims.

“SANCTERFERCATION.”

WHERE the witch hazels grew thickest, where the songs of the birds were sweetest, and the rush and ripple of the little creek clearest and most musical, was a square log church whose congregation “the world forgetting, by the world forgot” worshipped in Arcadian simplicity and content.

Both doors of the church were wide open that pleasant April day and Sister Beard, with the sleeves of her calico dress rolled back, swept the floor, under the seats, back of the doors, everywhere that searching, scratching broom swished industriously. And as she swept, she sang of that beautiful land so far away to most folks, but to her very near. Now and again she talked it to Sister Mackey, who sat on the steps.

“They say,” Sister Mackey observed, “that Tildy Amos have perferred sancterfercation—what d’ you think of *that*?”

“I hain’t thought,” Sister Beard answered, wiping the perspiration from her honest old face. “I call it a sin an’ a shame f’ *anybody* t’ perfer sancterfercation, much less a young thing like ‘Tildy.’”

"It's pow'ful hot in here," Sister Beard said.

"Yes'm," Sister Mackey conceded. "It's rale warm f' the time o' year. 'Tildy Amos perfessin sancterfercation do settle her with me."

"Why?" Sister Beard felt obliged to ask. "Why? Goodness greshus!"

Sister Beard lifted her faded eyes—eyes with the light of the New Jerusalem shining away down in their quiet depths and smiled pityingly.

"'Tildy's a good neighbor, a mighty free-hearted neighbor, an' a workin' equinomicle wife f' Dick. Dick Amos is about all they is in Canaan whot ain't got his lan' an' stock mortgaged." Sister Beard here spied a streak of sand near the "mourner's bench" and hastened to the extermination thereof.

Sister Mackey still sat on the steps, knitting, her brown sunbonnet pushed back and a pair of silver-bowed spectacles adorned her high, aggressive nose.

"Ain't that 'Tildy Amos a-comin'?" she asked, when a glimpse of a blue sunbonnet appeared adown the dim path through the oaks.

"That's 'Tildy! Don't she look fraish an' nice? 'Tildy always looks good t' me."

Sister Beard now stood on a bench sweeping down the walls.

Every log in the old square church was sacredly dear to her ; here her children one by one had vowed their solemn obligations to "one Lord, one faith and one baptism," and down yonder in the creek each had been "dipped" according to their mother's belief as to the way He "went down into Jordan." Here had been preached the funeral sermons of those two bright boys of her's, who fell at Shiloh.

A feeling of submission held her soul this morning. She did not misunderstand it, the very air was palpitant with loving sympathy, from out the folded blue above the little church, voices breathed benedictions doubly blest, and now no dark clouds lowered over her soul to obscure the visions that the strength and yearning of mother-love might bring. The time had passed when in her agony she wondered that the whole world did not weep for her sorrow ; that the sun could shine on, the birds sing, the seasons come and go.

No wonder Sister Beard loved the old church at Canaan.

"I'm goin' t' ast Tildy 'bout sancterfercation biznis," Sister Mackey declared as the notes of a song came to her antiquated ears—a song of that same happy Land so far away.

"Ain't this old Gray?" Sister Beard asked, referring to an old gray horse contentedly cropping the grass near the door.

"Same old Gray."

"Don't he las' good, though?"

"Toted pap all endurin' the four years o' the war an' made a crap ever' year since, didn't yer Gray? Tuck pap safe through fire an' smoke an' bullets, yes, yer did." Sister Mackey said proudly.

Many a story could old Gray have told of the "four years he toted pap"—of hard marches and changing scenes when

"Such a din was there,
As if men fought on earth below
And fiends in upper air."

"I recollect. He wasn't mor'n a colt then."

Sister Beard would fain have kept Sister Mackey's thoughts on any other subject than "sancterfercation;" but she was fated to fail.

"Thar's 'Tildy! I'm sholy goin' t' ast her," Sister Mackey declared, as she rose and advanced to meet Sister Amos.

Sister Mackey was the critic of Canaan—an uncompromising, wet-blanket sort of critic, whose edicts, though rough and sometimes almost brutal, often corrected follies and conceits, and had her criticisms been carefully and wisely administered, much good might have resulted; but alas! Sister Mackey's judgments were not always infallible for the spirit of criticism is invariably capricious.

"Howdy, Sister Mackey."

The pleasant greeting was ignored. Sister Mackey squared herself across the narrow path and began the attack.

"Tildy Amos, do yer perfess sancterfercation?" she demanded. Even the ruffle on her sunbonnet shivered with sacrilegious horror.

Sister Amos' blue eyes expanded, a smile hovered for a moment over her good-natured, freckled face, she said nothing.

"Tildy Amos, do yer perfess sancterfercation?"

"Sposen I do?"

"Goodness greshus!"

"Ain't this a free country and don't even a nigger believe what he wants t'? I can't see why ef I want to I can't believe in sancterfercation, do you?" Sister Amos appealed to Sister Beard. "Religion's free an' God's love's mighty cheap—easy to get," Sister Beard answered her.

"I'm proud t' hear somethin's cheap an' easy t' git—the fust I've heerd of;" Sister Mackey's sarcasm was wilting.

"Come on, Tildy!"

"I caint!" laughed Sister Amos pointing to Sister Mackey's tall figure barring the path. "I want t' know mo' 'bout that sancterfercation biznis, Matildy Amos!"

"'Tain't no mo' t' it."

"But thar is," Sister Mackey insisted,

turning her back and walking slowly towards the church.

"I don't see no use," Sister Amos complained, when the three were seated on the steps. "I don't see no use in Sister Mackey a everlastin'ly hauling folks over the coals jes cos they don't think like her."

Sister Beard had found her knitting and calmly worked as she enjoyed the fresh fragrance that was afloat in the dense forest about them and among the witch hazel bushes, now and again a radiating shaft of sunlight from out the drifting clouds glorified bush and tree and sky; but Sister Mackey was blind to nature's beauteous exhibition.

"I ain't quarrelin', Tildy, all I want t' know is 'bout that sancterfercation biznis."

"Spose yer tell us what that is," Sister Beard ventured.

"I've know'd lots of preachers whot perfessed sancterfercation," Sister Amos said; "an' maybe so noboddy but a preacher's got a right to perfess sancterfercation."

"Oh, yes, they is," from Sister Beard.

"But," Sister Mackey edged in, "'taint ever' preacher es can perfess sich."

"Now, Sister Mackey, 'jedge not."

"A preacher is the very lark that made me sick o' perfessin' sancterfercation. I knowd a preacher back in Georgy what uster preach an' pray an' take on much."

“That was his biznis—ef he’s a preacher.”

“Yes, Sister Beard, but it wasn’t his biznis t’ beat his po’ wife t’ death ever’ day.”

“She was tollerble tough t’ stan’ it,” Sister Amos giggled.

“Brother Perkins was his name,” continued Sister Mackey, “an’ he could preach, too—an’ pray! I woosht yer could aheard him!”

“Bless the Lord!” Sister Beard ejaculated.

“Fer a change, Brother Perkins ’d go off in a trance big meetin’ times an’ take on rale pitterful.”

“Amen!” Sister Beard exclaimed, dropping her knitting.

“Then naix day, Brother Perkins would whirl in an’ beat Sister Perkins mighty nigh daid an’ slap the chillen ’roun’ scand’lous.”

“Po’ little things!”

“One day at camp meetin’ Brother Perkins told ever’body he was so sancterfied he could not never do wrong no mo’, his old daddy-in-law was a layin’ f’ him—he’d been ahearin’ how mean he was t’ Sallie, an’ the old man had rid fawty mile t’ settle with Brother Perkins.”

“What did he do?”

“Jes wait till I set this heel.”

“Well,” Sister Mackey went on, after a moment’s silence.

“Sister Perkins lived five mile from the camp groun’ an’ the old man never stayed t’

night meetin', but went on to see Sallie. He went t' bed soon's night come an' slep' in a side room naix t' Sallie an' the chillen. She'd done told her pap how mean Brother Perkins is an' the old man 'lowed '*he'd* sancterfy him.'"

"I wonder!"

"Sister Perkins got a beatin' f' ever' santerfercation sermont Brother Perkins preached, an' f' ever' trance they all got wore out bodadaciously.

"To'des midnight that night, Brother Perkins rid inter the yard an' he hollered.

"Come git this hawse, Sallie, an' feed him."

"Feed the hawse yerse'f,' Sallie 'lowed.

"She felt sassy knowin' her pap's right thar clost by.

"Brother Perkins jumped inter the door a fumin' an' snawtin' an' the old man jumped out'n bed an' lit right in a fightin' o' him.

"Git them switches, Sallie,' her pap hollered, an' then he tied Brother Perkins an' made Sister Perkins han'le them hick'ries in a hurry."

"Laws a me! switched her husband!"

"Jes' 'bout es fa'r es f' him t' switch *her*, ain't it? Then the old man took a han' an', twixt 'em, Brother Perkins didn't have much sancterfercation left f' naix day's trance. The old man'd give him a lick an' say 'that's f' that

sancterfercation;' then he'd light in agin an' yell out 'this kyores trances,' an' he kep' on a kyorin sancterfercation an' trances 'til he wore Brother Perkins t' a thin frazzle."

"I do declar'!" Sister Beard was shocked.

"Brother Perkins was a mighty fine man after that. Sallie'd got the upper hand an' she kep' it too."

"He never preached no mo'."

"I say! Brother Perkins was 'lected bishop after he got rid o' sancterfercation. Preach? I reckon he did. An' mor'n that, Sallie made him cook an' wash an' work the gyarden an' he never beat *her* no mo'—never had no mo' trance spells, no sancterfercation neether. Oh, Brother Perkins was a mighty fine man after his daddy-in-law kyored him o' trances an' sancterfercation notions."

"That's what yer 'spize sancterfercation like pizen fer?" Sister Amos laughed.

"Lord he'p us," breathed Sister Beard.

"Yer hit the nail squar' on ther haid, Matildy Amos."

Sister Beard arose and walked toward the witch hazels, a cute little wood-violet peeped timidly from its green bed, and Sister Beard smiled upon it, then stooping she plucked it.

"Sorter lonesome, ain't yer?" she cooed as to a little child, her pure soul feeling a kinship in each azure petal.

In her imaginings of the Better Land, Sister Beard pictured "the fields of living green" all dotted over with blue violets, white lillies and daisies—with an occasional creek in which to "dip" the "sprinkled" candidate for joys eternal. The fancies of her high-strung, sensitive soul were to her a precious boon. She found "tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything." So tangible, so real did it all seem to her as she stood 'neath the shifting light and coloring of that April sky that all that seemed lacking was the power to raise her helpless hands and rent in twain the inscrutable veil that separated soul from soul; her boys were just a little beyond, a little higher.

Sister Beard's simple faith rose above the mouldering bones of her dead sorrow,

"For life is ever lord of death,
And love shall never lose its own."

"Come back here, Sister Beard! What're yer standing' thar lookin' so cur'is fer?

"In a trance?" Sister Amos laughed.

"Sister Beard don't live down in Canaan with us, nohow; she's always a soarin'." Sister Mackey complained.

"Maybeso; she's perfessed sancterfercation," Sister Amos laughed again.

"We heard so much 'bout Brother Perkins."

"Well," Sister Mackey yawned, folding up her knitting, "I got t' go home an' see 'bout pap's dinner—he don't call nothin' dinner ef the pot ain't b'iled. When yer comin', Tildy?" she asked, when, with many grunts, she had crawled atop her saddle on old Gray.

"I'm comin' 'fo' long; you come," Sister Amos said, handing her a switch.

"Ef yer can stay on the yerth long 'nuf come t' see us, Sister Beard!" Sister Mackey called, as she trotted down the big road.

"I will; you come."

Sister Beard now stood inside the church looking searchingly up and down and around. She gave the big Bible on the "stand" a thorough dusting with her apron, and coming out locked the doors.

"Brother Polk 'll find the meetin' house clear t'morrer, won't he?"

"I hope so; ain't he a good man, Tildy?"

"Do he perfess sancterfercation?" Sister Amos asked with a mischievous twinkle in her blue eyes.

"Not as I know of, Brother Polk's a mighty good man, 'Tildy."

"He ain't as good as you air, *then* I ain't goin' t' wait till yer's daid t' say what *I* know. You're the best woman I know 'cept'n 'tis maw," declared Sister Amos, as they walked away.

"La, Tildy!"

"Yes'm, I say it now an' I say it ergin, Sister Beard's the bes' woman in Canaan 'cept'n maw, ever'body 'll tell you so. Why don't you perless sancterfercation, Sister Beard?"

"'Tildy Amos!"

"If I was es good es you I'd—"

"No, Tildy, chile, not till I git up yawnder with my boys, *then* I'll be plum sanctifide—won't I, Tildy?" Sister Beard's eyes had the New Jerusalem light in them again.

"Yes'm," Sister Amos said softly.

"Yes'm, then you can perless an' persess too, all sorts an' a heap of sancterfercation—all you'll ever need."

"Bless the Lord!" cried Sister Beard when they separated.

"We'll git thar, Tildy!"

"Or die a tryin'!" Sister Amos responded.

And as each walked her respective homeward path they sang of that far away land.



A LOWLY HERO.

LIKE RASSELAS, the Abyssinian, we lived the balmy days "only to know the soft vicissitudes of pleasure and repose." We wandered "in gardens of fragrance and slept in fortresses of security;" but like all pleasure seekers, we were now weary of the monotonous round of uneventful days, and former delights grew stale. Gentle Mrs. Gray and Miss Harland, the invalid whose thin, scarlet cheeks and bright eyes told too plainly the presence of the destroyer, the quiet rector and the somewhat pompous major, with his little blonde wife, made up our party.

"Some one tell a story, please," cooed the pretty blonde, tossing aside "Hero Worship." "Who ever knew a live hero?" she laughingly asked.

"I have," promptly answered Mrs. Gray.

"How delightful! Do tell us about him; who was he?"

"The one instance of true heroism that came under my immediate notice," said the little woman, "was displayed by a hero of ebon hue, a strong young Hercules, who, though rough

and untaught, possessed a nature grand, deep and noble."

"Yes," assented the sentimental major. "Often among the humblest flowers we find the rarest odors."

"And," resumed Mrs. Gray, "among the busy workers, with hardened hands and toil-stained faces, we find great hearts, strong and true, and minds, though uncultivated, ready and sagacious. During the late war," she continued, "my father and brother were in the army, and the overseer being drafted into service, my mother, my sisters and myself were compelled to leave our beautiful home in the city and go up the river to the plantation to manage, as best we could, the affairs of that place. Our people were trustworthy and kind, so we had but little trouble. A few weeks after our arrival at the plantation our hearts were saddened by the death of a much-loved servant—Rachel was her name; she had nursed my mother's older children, and we were all very much attached to her. Rachel died suddenly, of heart trouble, the physician said, and her little children were cared for by a good old granny. Albert, the husband of Rachel, was a 'field hand,' and a reliable man."

"Of what time do you speak?"

"This was in the spring of 1864. The trans-Mississippi department was under the

command of the Confederate general, E. Kirby Smith. The struggle east of the Mississippi river had drawn from us the chivalry of the great Southwest; the sons of Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas were scattered from Gettysburg to Vicksburg, and a diminished force composed of the fathers and husbands were left to meet the gathering foe that threatened, with General Steele at Little Rock, Ark., and General Banks at Alexandria, La. The conscript bureau had gleaned the fields of the last of the 'bearded grain,' and nothing was left but 'the flowers that grew between'—the boys too young to go far from home, realizing now the danger coming so near, as fast as allowed repaired to camps, and yet the force was not large enough.

"Then a new order came, and the men-slaves were impressed and sent to the shops as laborers and teamsters in the various departments, to fill such places as they could, in order that for every slave so employed another soldier could be relieved and go to the front. The burden of feeding and clothing the army devolved upon the women of the South. Cheerfully, and with untold sacrifices, did they do their part. Our people did not escape the impressment law."

"Excuse me, but whom do you mean by 'our people?'" chirped the beauty from the hammock.

"We called our slaves 'our people,'" responded Mrs. Gray with a smile. "They were impressed into service and sent to Shreveport, La., to work. Among the men was one who had been married only a year; he objected to leaving his wife and baby. Jake was his name. While they were discussing the question among themselves, Albert presented himself at the dining-room door.

"'Good mawnin', mistis,' he said, doffing his hat, 'an' skuse me fo' 'sturbin' yer brekfus, but Ise axin a favor dis mawnin'.

"'All right, Albert. What is it?' asked my mother.

"'Yer see, mistis, as how Jake is 'pressed' along wid tudder niggers an' Jake he got a likely wife an' mighty antic boy.'

"'Well?'

"Albert hesitated and scratched his wooly pate.

"'I know,' my mother said sympathetically, 'I know all the circumstances, but am powerless.'

"'I aint blamin' yer, mistis; de Lawd knows I aint er blamin' nobody; but I druther go in Jake's place an' let him stay wid hees wife an' boy.'

"'Why, Albert!' exclaimed my mother. 'You can't mean it! How should I get along without you? Think of the number of women

and children to be provided for; the men left behind are too old and the boys too young to be depended on.'

" 'I'se recommembrin' all dat, mistis; but I knows what it is for a man an' wife to be sipperated. Oh, mistis! de days all lonesome and de nights a year long. Taint no sunshine for Albut here nor nowhar. Hits all a dark shadder an' de moonshine don't nigh tech Albut. No, mistis, hits all trial an' tribberlashins. Lemme go, please, mistis. Let Jake stay wid hees wife,' plead the earnest voice, half choked by sobs.

" 'Unk Albert,' called my little sister going to his side, 'would you really go away to save Jake from going?'

" 'Yes, honey,' he replied, his sorrowful eyes lighting up with a pleasant expression, as with his great black hand he stroked her sunny curls. 'Yes, honey, Unk Albut ain't got nuffin t' stay here fer. Jake got hees wife. Honey, ax yer mudder t' let ole Albut go.'

" 'Use your own pleasure, Albert,' at last consented my mother.

" 'De Lawd bress mistis!' he cried as he hastened to the quarters.

" 'De Lawd sabe mistis!' echoes Uncle Gabe, waving his hat as he leaned on his crutch.

“They left us that afternoon, one hundred tall, strong sons of Ham, of varying ages from twenty to forty-five years.

“ ‘Albert,’ said my mother, ‘I must tell you before you go that in Shreveport men die at the rate of fifty a day, often the death rate is greater, the fever is terrible.’

“She looked up into his face, hoping by this last appeal to discourage his going.

“ ‘Kain’ he’p it, mistis ; I spec hits ’bout es nigh a route to Hebbin by Shrebepote as hit air by dis plantashin. Albut aint keerin’, mistis, kaze de big gates up yander’s wide open waitin’ fer Albut ; an’ Lawd ! Rachel’s er standin’ jes’ inside.’

“ ‘Boys !’ he cried, turning to the multitude assembled under the oaks on the lawn. ‘Boys, mind mistis, an’ do right an’ be bidderble. Be hones’, boys ; don’t go to cuttin’ up no disre-gyardable capers an’ pranks. Jes whirl in an’ up an’ make de crap fer mistis. Nebber mine de cotton, but ten’ de cawn ; plow deep, boys, an’ don’t let de grass git de upper hand o’ de crap.’

“ ‘Move on there ! Move on, boys !’ was commanded.

“ ‘Good-by, mistis. Far’well, chillun !’ cried Albert. ‘Gawd bress mistis !’

“ ‘Gawd bress mistis !’ cried a chorus of an hundred voices as they marched away.

“In these turbulent times there were no established mail routes in our country; indeed, the receipt of a letter was quite an event. For two months we heard nothing of our men; then one ran away from Shreveport and came home more dead than alive. Of the hundred who had gone from our plantation, twenty-two had died. Albert had been detailed on hospital duty, and before another month had passed he, too, had given up the burden of life. Good, faithful Albert! Though he lives neither in song nor story his was as grand a heroism as was ever recorded; his Rachel waited just within ‘the big, white gate’ and waited not in vain.” Mrs. Gray had “tears in her voice” as she concluded her pathetic story.

“We brush the skirts of martyrs and tread the path with heroes and are all unmindful; but God noteth all and will reward as surely as the day followeth the dark night,” reverently spoke the white-haired rector, as we sat silent and thoughtful.

“And it’s just as near Heaven by way of Silvandale as home,” murmured the invalid, folding her light wrap closer about her.

The great umbrellas of the elders, white and tender, quivered in the sunlight above the pale forehead, and the blossoms permeated the balmy air with a delicate, grateful fragrance. Thickets of the slender golden-rod and a wild

rose twined about an old stump as if to convert their sweetness and beauty into a mantle of charity to hide its decaying strength and sightliness. Looking up through the shimmering leaves above into the pure sapphire dome beyond, I thought of the hero who gave his life for his friend. After his "lonesome days" and weary nights he reached the haven.

"“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,”" softly quoted the rector, as if following the drift of my thoughts. "“And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.”"



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